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S.H. 182

ANTICHRIST;
PAPAL, PROTESTANT, AND INFIDEL.

AN

ESTIMATE

OF THE

RELIGION OF THE TIMES:

COMPRISING

A VIEW OF THE ORIGIN AND GENIUS

OF THE

Roman Catholic System,

AND OF ITS

IDENTITY WITH EVERY FORM OF NOMINAL CHRISTIANITY.

BY THE REV. JOHN RILAND, M.A.

CURATE OF YOXALL, STAFFORDSHIRE.

—"*Even now are there many Antichrists.*"—1 JOHN ii. 18.

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man Catholic Expositor for May 2, 1825; and, by the kindness of Mr. P. Dixon Hardy of Dublin, re-appears in illustration of the present volume.

My unwillingness to employ the weapons of an enemy, in supporting the powers of the press by those of the pencil, and in a form so rude and inartificial, was overcome, in the first instance, by the consideration that the design in question is not a Protestant caricature, sketched with an intent to prove ridicule to be the test of truth; but an authentic specimen of the inventions of the Roman Catholics themselves, openly distributed in aid of their policy. I was also struck by the similarity it bears to a forgery circulated, to a surprising extent, among our own populace, under the name of 'Our Saviour's Letter;'—a circumstance affording familiar proof of what is called, on my title, 'the identity of the Papal system with every form of nominal Christianity.'

There is, however, all the difference between the respective *authorities* by which these two specimens of blasphemy are sanctioned. I use a strong term, in obedience to a definition adopted by Dr. Johnson from Ayliffe, who writes, 'Blasphemy, strictly and properly, is an offering of some indignity or injury unto God himself, either by words or writing'—an inter-

pretation, it will be allowed, fully justified by the facts of the case before us. As to the wretched trash distributed by our hawkers, *that* is not published PERMISSU SUPERIORUM; but in direct violation of existing, although dormant, statutes against profaneness; and receives its *imprimatur* from the ignorance and superstition common to all mankind. On the other hand, the blessing of St. Francis of Assisi is sold, it is presumed, in the very colonnades of St. Peter's; and, certainly, in a city where the press is passively obedient to an absolute hierarchy; and where, also, the connivance of government is well known to be among the established forms of its authority.

The Blessing itself is one of those many instruments of Antichrist which, like certain reptiles of the lacertine order, excite at once sensations of disgust and terror. *We*, indeed, may examine it at our ease; as we do a stuffed alligator in the glass-case of a museum. *Mortui non mordent.* But what are the feelings of a thinking person who buys and reads such a document within sight of the college of Cardinals, and of the Inquisition! His human emotions are those of indignation; his religious ones, of grief and alarm. Let us place ourselves in his situation; and we then sympathize as

men with the millions who are insulted, enslaved, and defrauded by impostures so vile and undisguised: as Christians, we compassionate souls deluded to their eternal loss; while we contemplate a visible commentary on the declaration, "This is your hour, and the power of darkness!"

The Romanists are very fond—and well they may be—of citing a passage, which they have discovered, I believe, somewhere in the writings of St. Augustine, that *pictures are the books of the unlearned.* It is one of the golden sentences of their church; and is estimated, immeasurably beyond its value, by a people conversant with picture-language, hieroglyphics, chambers of imagery, and all other physical means of awakening the passions of animal nature under the name of devotion. We have similar stimulants, and similar arts of deception, among ourselves. An altar-piece representing the Crucified; a chorus in the Messiah; a pensive walk in the aisles of a cathedral during the time of service, accompanied by recollections from Milton and Gray—these things constitute the religion of many a Protestant, who utters bitter complaints against the superstitions of another party: and thus we and our opponents are again identified.

But, whatever resemblance may be traced between the formalists or partisans of the two rival communions, my immediate object is to convict our adversaries of the guilt *they* incur in countenancing such things as the Blessing of St. Francis. I am, at the same time, fully aware of the apology offered, in this relation, by such British Catholics as, having not been educated in the glooms of cloisters, but amidst the intelligence and social usages of a free country, are compelled to blush at the extravagancies of their own church; and plead that pilgrimages, holy wells, and all matters of like pretension, are only local customs; by no means essential to their religion; inconsistent with its doctrine and regular ministrations; and no further necessary to its credit than the grimaces of a buffoon to the success of a tragedy.

It is asked, then, why does not Dr. Doyle interpose, without a moment's delay, his high authority, and utterly abolish the ceremonies practised at Lough Dearg, and at various other stations of most hateful superstition in Ireland? If he cannot do this, what becomes of the boasted powers of the hierarchy of his church? If he can, what shall we say to his eloquent periods, asserting the independence of that church of every auxiliary which cannot be

supplied by good sense, the right use of reason, obedience to the revealed will of God; and by traditions inculcating nothing inconsistent with the Gospel, but confirmatory of its truth and eternal importance?

Before we proceed further, I will cite, for the information of readers not familiar with the abominations of Irish idolatry, the following authentic statement.—

'Lough Dearg is a lake surrounded by mountains. It is about four miles broad by six long; containing several rocky islands; on one of which the pilgrims perform their several penances. The island is about half a mile from the shore. On approaching it we found all the people walking round one of the buildings, in the direction of the sun.

'There are two chapels; one for confession, and another for general worship. Into the former, no strangers are admitted; but on entering the latter by one of the galleries, a mighty multitude, of the most apparently devout worshippers I ever beheld, presented themselves. All were kneeling, except the choir; and every one busy for himself, without the smallest interruption from his neighbour. The only instruments they used were their beads, crucifix, and manual. Their food is a small quantity

of bread, which they bring into the island with them; and water, *which by the Priest's blessing is supposed to be made equally nutritive as wine.* They take this only once a day, except when in the prison, where they remain twenty-four hours. During this period, they are prohibited from tasting food of any kind. TWENTY-FOUR PRIESTS are the regular number for officiating in this place; each, one hour. The prison is a dungeon, into which the light of day is not allowed to enter. A man with a switch is kept in regular exercise here, to keep the pilgrims in a wakeful state. Sleep is very dangerous; for a single nod may lose the soul for ever, without the interference of all the fathers and saints of the calendar, and a considerable sum of money.

'I have, after much difficulty, obtained access to a publication chiefly intended for the direction of the pilgrims at Lough Dearg, which I designed to transmit you, but was unable to purchase it; they are so very cautious about the person into whose hands they will allow it to come. I shall therefore give you a few extracts from it, in its own language. It begins with describing the spiritual benefits of the pilgrimage, and says—

'"CHRISTIAN READER, Observe, that it is very proper and profitable for a man conversant

in this turbulent world, who, having the care of a house and family, is necessarily involved in the tribulations and affairs of this wicked world, and surrounded with infinite occasion and snares of offending God, to withdraw himself from these unavoidable snares of sin, either perpetually, and during his life, or at least for some time; and to retire to some solitary place, to look to the salvation of his soul; following herein the example of the Royal Prophet, saying, 'Behold, I have retired, and remained in the wilderness.' (Psalm. l. 5—7.)"

'The pilgrims are directed, on entering this holy ground, to approach it with all due reverence and awe, bare-headed, and bare-footed: "For if the place wherein the angel spoke to Moses, concerning the Israelites' delivery from the bondage of Pharoah, was so holy that he was commanded to tread upon it bare-footed, why should not this place be holy, where God commissioned and deputed our Apostolic Moses, St. Patrick, to enlarge us out of the slavery and captivity of our spiritual Pharoah, the Devil? And if Joshua was commanded to loose his shoes from off his feet, when he spoke to the prince of the host of the Lord, because the place whereon he stood was holy, why should not this place be holy, where we speak to God,

and St. Patrick, prince and chief of the saints of our nation, and go thither bare-footed? Finally, if the Prophet Isaiah was commanded to walk naked for the sins of others, why should we not enter this place of penance bare-footed and bare-headed, to expiate our enormous crimes?"

"Moreover, we pass into the island by water, that the words of the Royal Prophet (Psalm lxv.) may be applied to us: 'We have passed through fire and water, and thou leadest us into a place of refreshment:' that by the fire of devotion and waters of tribulation God may lead us hence, to the spiritual refreshment of our souls and consciences."

'Having humbly received the superior's blessing, the pilgrims kneel before the altar of St. Patrick, signing themselves with the sign of the cross, saying, "In whose name we begin our pilgrimage;" and there they say one *Ave*, one *Pater*, and *Creed*. "The one Pater is to signify the unity of the Divine nature, who, according to Isaiah and St. Paul, worketh all our works in us (Isaiah xxvi. 12; 1 Cor. xii. 11); especially our penance, which we now begin. We say an Ave, that, as we received our Saviour and Redeemer by the blessed Virgin Mary, so we would by her intercession

obtain grace and remission of our sins from God, and perseverance in doing penance, and eternal bliss. We say a Creed, that by it we would make a profession of our faith before God; for it is impossible to please God without faith. (Heb. xi.) These same reasons may serve for all Paters, Aves, and Creeds said hereafter. Rising from the altar, we kiss its stone, that we may be cleansed from our sins; like Isaiah, who was purged and cleansed when his lips were touched with a stone taken from the altar. (Isaiah vi.) Afterwards, kneeling at the corner of the chapel, we repeat three Paters, three Aves, and one Creed, to obtain from the Holy Trinity three things necessary for penance; to wit, the fear of the Lord, whereby sin is banished away (Ec. xiii.); humility, by which our prayers penetrate the clouds; and patience, by which we possess our souls (Luke xxii.) In our first going round the chapel we kiss the cross, which standeth before the chapel door, to signify that we ought to embrace and lift up our cross, and follow Christ, who spilt his precious blood seven times for us: first, in his circumcision; secondly, in the Garden of Gethsemani; thirdly, by the scourges when he was bound to the pillar; fourthly, when he was crowned with thorns; fifthly, when he was

stripped naked upon Mount Calvary; sixthly, when he was nailed to the cross; seventhly, after his death, when his side was pierced with a lance. And we touch it with our shoulders; by which we signify that we ought to persevere in it in carrying our cross to the end*." '

Is this account true, or is it not? While sceptics are wandering to their several conclusions, it will argue little temerity on the part of Protestant believers, if—and without any violation of the law of love—they DEFY Dr. Doyle, and the whole titular episcopacy of Ireland, even to *attempt* the abolition of the penances of Lough Dearg. No: let them, at their peril, venture to prohibit their own slaves from riveting new links to the fetters which already gall them; and we shall soon witness the loss of an influence which its present possessors cannot afford to surrender.

I venture upon these statements in direct opposition to the opinion of many excellent persons, some of them being personal friends; and whose general sentiments on the subjects under discus-

* Roman Catholic Expositor, No. I.—The publication quoted in the text is entitled, 'The Pilgrimage of Lough Dearg. *I will give thee understanding, and instruct thee in his way by which you are to go.* Psalm xxxi. 5, 10. Approved and written by B. D. *Blessed are they whose sins are forgiven.*'

sion perfectly coincide with my own. But we differ in this: *they* insist, that the monks of Assisi, and the priests of Lough Dearg, are alone responsible for their respective acts of profaneness; while their present opponent recognises such deeds as part and parcel of the Papal laws. The policy of the court of Rome can only be paralleled by that of Pekin; which regulates its vast machine of government with a nicety, and persevering vigilance, such as might seem to be unattainable by the limited powers of man. Even the Jesuit missionaries were baffled by the mandarins—a fact which none but themselves can fully understand. And shall any man persuade us, that such things as the Blessing of St. Francis, and the penances of the Holy Lake, are not among the wheels and levers *necessary* to the movements of the Papal machinery; kept in constant repair, oiled, and cleaned, by engineers appointed and paid—by whom, but the very persons who almost deny their existence?

It is difficult, and indeed all but impossible, to write on these highly offensive and revolting points with the moderation demanded by the religion of Jesus Christ. We breathe a polluted atmosphere; and, being predisposed to imbibe contagion, it is well if we do not sicken of the

same distemper which we would cure in others. How easy is it to declaim against Popery in the spirit of a Jesuit and of an Inquisitor! If I have done this in any portion of these papers, the inconsistency is all my own. It is not forced upon myself, or any writer, by the current of controversy, however strong and impetuous; since the power of temptation is no excuse for yielding to it.

In the relation we bear to the Catholics, never let us forget our several advantages. As a body, *they* are in a state of comparative darkness. With ourselves it is far otherwise; and it becomes us to remember, what was said by the only infallible Teacher of the Christian church, "That servant which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required." The emotions of a Christian, when contemplating the worst crimes of Antichrist, should be all resolved into compassion. They should also stimulate him to acts of intercession, and of self-recollection.

The exercise, however, of the most devotional

feelings is perfectly consistent with a clear preception of the wickedness of the Papal imposture; whether developed at the consecrated Stations of Ireland, or within the most secret sanctuary of the Babylonian mysteries. We may alike defy all the authorities of the Vatican to meddle with the popular falsehoods and practices prevailing at Rome, Florence, Naples, and Madrid. I will mention only one,—the daring blasphemy of the legend of St. Catherine of Sienna! Let the defenders of the Latin church explain, if they will venture upon the experiment, the reason why such audacious iniquity is yet tolerated. But this they will not do. Every looker-on, nevertheless, knows, to a certainty, that these abominations are indispensable to the continuance, security, and extension of the reigning system. Take away such buttresses, and the whole edifice will crumble into dust. We may apply to Popery what Shakspeare says of life—and, if possible, in a more emphatic sense—'All thy accommodations are nurs'd by baseness.'

The abject character of these supports is not, indeed, in all cases, either obvious, or even suspected. A system essentially vile may have its decorations of beauty. The residence of an assassin may be affluent with the splendours of

architecture, sculpture, and graphic science; the turban of an Algerine despot, refulgent with gold and jewelry. These analogies are well understood by such as have attended the ceremonies of the Holy Week in the capital of the Papal empire. Who can describe, for example, the *Miserereres* of the Sistine chapel?—'Never,' writes an ear-witness, 'by mortal sense, was heard a strain of such powerful, such heart-moving pathos. The accordant tones of a hundred human voices—and one which seemed more than human—ascended together to heaven for mercy to mankind, for pardon to a guilty and sinning world. It had nothing in it of this earth—nothing that breathed the ordinary feelings of our nature. It seemed as if every sense and power had been concentred into that plaintive expression of lamentation, of deep suffering and supplication, which possessed the soul. It was the strain that disembodied spirits might have used, who had just passed the boundaries of death, and sought release from the mysterious weight of woe, and the tremblings of mortal agony that they had suffered in the passage of the grave. It was the music of another state of being. It lasted till the shadows of evening fell deeper; and the red dusky glare, as it issued stronger from the concealed

recess whence the singing proceeded, shed a partial but strong light upon the figures near it.....The last, the most entrancing harmony, arose in a strain that might have moved heaven itself—a deeper, more pathetic sound of lamentation than mortal voices ever breathed. Its effect upon the minds of those who heard it was almost too all-powerful to be borne; and never, never can be forgotten*.'

How difficult is it to believe, against apparently the very evidence of the senses, that this sublime effort is, in essence, nothing but a paltry imposition—a juggler's artifice—to make the world believe in the pretensions of Antichrist! The whole process, when decomposed by moral analysis, is found to possess no further dignity, nor claim to human admiration, than may be discovered in the liquefaction of the blood of St. Januarius, and in the sacred embroidery of Ferdinand.

A keen observer of these things, and of the anatomy of the human mind, writes:—'Nothing tires me so soon as pomp, except the description of it. I never could read, and certainly I will never write, a description of the Easter ceremonies at St. Peter's—ceremonies

* 'Rome in the Nineteenth Century.'

which, varying every five minutes, form the business of a week. I will not, indeed, join with travellers in laughing at things so important to millions. I have seen, I have even felt, their effects. Some passages of the rite are supremely grand; some sounds would reach the soul of an infidel. How awful the pause in Friday's passion, at the words, *Consummatum est!* How pathetic the close of the *miserere!* But the whole is too long: variety is tormented into littleness, and sometimes into trick.—So well does the church understand the power of contrast, that this principle seems to regulate all the operations of the season. Contrast is studied in the functions of Thursday; in the scenic changes of Saturday; in the abrupt transition from the debaucheries encouraged in Carnival, to the mortification of Lent; and, again, in the re-action of the human mind, ever elastic towards pleasure, from the restraints which are multiplied in Passion Week, to the instant revelry of Easter *.'

We do not accuse all the performers in these magnificent masques and pantomimes of acting the part of hypocrites. Some may seriously think that they are doing God service. The

* 'Forsyth's Remarks on Italy,' 1816. 395—7.

guilt lies upon the managers, scene-painters, and mechanists; who employ subordinate agents, far less enlightened than themselves, to uphold the mighty delusion. For the principals in this conspiracy to affect to intercede 'for mercy to mankind, and pardon to a guilty and sinning world,' while their entire policy is directly adverse to the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, and blots out the prime truth of the Gospel!—such a fraud might, to a certain extent, be paralleled by a party of West-Indian drivers, who should mingle, with the shrieks of their victims, 'plaintive expressions of lamentation' for the sorrows and sufferings, and for 'the tremblings of mortal agony,' endured under the brand and the scourge.

But we, who pass all our days at home, in this glory of all lands, do not hear and see the sounds and sights of Babylon; and, so far, we know no more of its mysteries than the inhabitants of Calcutta know of an iceberg. Some of them may possibly have examined the engravings in Captain Parry's Voyages; or heard a British seaman describe the frost and darkness of a long Arctic night. An equally practical acquaintance with the Papal form of Christianity may be obtained by a morning's lounge in an ambassador's chapel in London.

We may just discern the shadow: all the realities are behind the scenes.—From these accusatory periods I again retire, with a painful consciousness of the powers of recrimination possessed by our adversaries; as the exercise of these might so fairly expose the inconsistencies of the Reformed Church. "Thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege?"

With regard to the Estimate of the Religion of the Times made in this treatise, much of it may be examined either as a question of fact, or as a question of degrees. To ascertain the exact truth, is difficult; and we all form our opinions on such subjects as influenced by personal and local circumstances. Many will consider an observer of mankind, if placed in the retirements of the country, as far less able to draw up a report on the spiritual statistics of an empire, than one who resides in the capital, at the head-quarters of human existence. A contrary opinion will be advocated by such as think, that they who dwell among the swarms of a metropolis see mankind chiefly in the mass, while a retired man contemplates his fellows in detail: what he knows, partakes more of familiarity; and is therefore less likely to be inaccurate.

A parish is a little world. The history of the neighbouring cottage tells much; very

much, of what has been confessed by the inmates of palaces; when they had laid aside the robes of state, and discovered the original equality of man in sorrow, pain, and guilt. In this view, the annals of the poor, as far as the present student has read them, are neither short nor simple. He has not examined the record by the lights of Goldsmith and Thompson, but under the tuition of such masters as Cowper and Crabbe—or rather, he trusts, as guided by the Volume, where *one* of these poets found that scheme of Divine philosophy which he explained and applied, with such extraordinary skill and fidelity, in reference to all classes of society.

'WE,' said Henry of Agincourt to his Princess—or, at least, our dramatic historian, with his ready sagacity, has said it for him—'WE are the makers of manners.' What is thus made, descends, by regular gradations, to our villagers; and on this point I may be forgiven, by the admirers of good sense, and of the eloquence of poetry, if I cite, for the second time, what I have employed on a very different occasion * :—

'Yet why, you ask, these humble crimes relate?
Why make the poor as guilty as the great?

* 'Memoirs of a West-India Planter.' 1827. 19.

To shew the great, those mightier sons of pride,
How near in vice the lowest are allied;
Such are their natures, and their passions such,
But these disguise too little, those too much:
So shall the man of power and pleasure see
In his own slave as vile a wretch as he;
In his luxurious lord the servant find
His own low pleasures, and degenerate mind;
And each, in all, the kindred vices trace,
Of a poor, blind, bewildered, erring race;
Who, a short time in varied fortune past,
Die, and are equal in the dust at last *.'

As to the literary demerits of this book, let them be visited with all the severity of criticism; but on one condition,—that my guilt as an author shall not draw the judge's attention from my subject. On this head, I would remind the reader of Dr. Johnson's remarks on the degeneracy of the dispute between Milton and Salmasius. I am also conscious how extremely unfavourable it must be to a writer's claims to consistency, and to the orderly arrangement of his materials, when, as in the present instance, a work has been composed at various times, and during a succession of events bearing upon the topics under examination. It is, further, exposed to offences of repetition.

At the close of the 'Reflections on the Revolution in France,' first published in the autumn of 1790, their author says to his cor-

* 'Crabbe's Works.' 1823. i. 22.

respondent—'I have told you candidly my sentiments. I think they are not likely to alter yours: I do not know that they ought. You are young: you cannot guide, but must follow the fortune of your country. But hereafter they may be of some use to you, in some future form which your commonwealth may take. In the present, it can hardly remain; but, before its final settlement, it may be obliged to pass, as one of our poets says, "through great varieties of untried being;" and in all its transmigrations to be purified by fire and blood.' The prophetic character of the last sentence was verified by the desolations of Europe for the succeeding twenty-five years. At the end of that period, peace was restored to France and to the surrounding nations.

The reflectors of the present day think that we are on the eve of another revolution, which will assume the form of a war of opinions; while many exclaim, in the lines following Mr. Burke's citation from Addison,

'Through what new scenes and changes must we pass!
The wide, the unbounded prospect lies before us;
But shadows, clouds, and darkness rest upon it!

Those who honour this essay with a perusal, will soon discover that its author looks to the gloomy quarter of the horizon. At the same time he would aspire to the confidence, that

there is not the least cause of anxiety as to the final result of whatever calamities God may, in the interval, choose to inflict upon mankind. If he should see fit to purify his church *by fire and blood*, such as pass through the painful process will yet have cause to own, "True and righteous are thy judgments, thou King of saints!" If, on the other hand, the world continue its present comparatively pacific course, and so pass onward to a period of millennial glory, we know—or ought to know—that the servants of God, of whatever division of the universal church, will be preserved from the allurements and insidious temptations ever attendant upon a state of external tranquillity. "I pray not," said the Son of God to his Father, "that thou shouldest take them out of the world; but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word. And now I am no more in the world; but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me; that they may be one, as we are." Would that the feelings, which this act of the Redeemer's intercession ought properly to inspire in our bosoms, were ever present and influ-

ential! We might then venture, with greater confidence, into the labyrinths of controversy. We should also give a reason of the hope that is in us with meekness and fear. Instead of this, we often argue in the spirit of petulance and self-confidence; or fight under the Christian banner as mercenaries, calculating upon the success of a campaign for our own advantage. No wonder that we are so frequently thrown into disorder, and return from the combat with loss and disgrace!

The employment of irony and satire, and of arguments grounded upon motives exclusively human, is indeed justified by many, on the plea of what may be found of a similar character in the writings of the Apostles, and even in the recorded example of their Lord. It may be yet expedient to abstain from imitation, where the originals are few, and of an equivocal nature. In the present angry and protracted debate, the temptation to disregard the regulations of civilized war is not easily resisted. To this I have already adverted; but leave others to judge how far I have escaped the snares by which numbers, on both sides, have been entangled.

Foxall, Sept. 1, 1828.

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ANTICHRIST,

PAPAL, PROTESTANT, AND INFIDEL.

INTRODUCTION.

I do confidently believe, that all the particular national churches, throughout the whole Christian world, are no other than sisters, daughters of the same Father, God; of the same mother, the spiritual Jerusalem which is from above: some of them are elder sisters, others younger; some more tall and large spread, others of less stature; some fairer in respect of holiness of life and orthodoxy of judgment, others fouler in respect of corruptions, both of doctrine and manners; still sisters; and if any of them shall usurp a mistress-ship over the rest, or make herself a queen over them, and make them subjects and slaves to her; or a motherhood to the rest (otherwise than in a priority, and aid of conversion), and make them but daughters and punies to her, she shall be guilty of an high arrogance and presumption, against Christ and his dear spouse the church; since, with the just and holy God, there is no respect of persons or places, but in all nations those that serve him best are most accepted of him.—BISHOP HALL's *Shaking of the Olive Tree*. 1660. 407.

THE principal aim of the author, in the following sheets, is to do something towards supplying what he considers to be a strange deficiency, on the part of Protestant writers engaged in the current controversy. A subject

essentially religious has been almost entirely secularized. It has been made matter far more of rivalry, than of humiliation and spiritual usefulness. The consequence already is, that the churches of the Reformation are rapidly losing what remained to them of the credit they once possessed.

If this account be but partially true, we are arrived at a very serious crisis; and, although it may not be too late to repair our loss, yet we shall do well to apply to ourselves what was said on a different occasion, "What thou doest, do quickly." Neither the Roman Catholics themselves, nor the Infidel World, which is so eagerly watching the manœuvres of a *Reformed* communion, will give us back what we have forfeited; unless we return to our principles, and prove, by our lives, that we really embrace them. This may, indeed, be expecting too much from the Protestant body at large; but there is no reason why some of its members should not make an effort to convince mankind, that the question may still be argued on the basis of Christianity itself; and not in its connection with ecclesiastical interests.

With regard to what is advanced in the sequel against the *doctrines* of the Church of Rome, many misapprehensions may probably

be detected. To be accurate on such a point is, however, no ambition of mine. In common with most persons fond of reading, I have looked through what are called dictionaries of all religions, and have had quite enough of the kind of information they affect to furnish. In earlier life, we think it of high importance—and I do not now deny its relative utility—to know about the Gnostics, Montanists, Monothelites, Patropassians, and a thousand other sects, whose insignificance is hidden under fine names; and they who continue to value such learning may find plenty of it, if they will only submit to the trouble of turning over the incredible heaps of ecclesiastical rubbish accumulated, during the lapse of time, by human fatuity.

There is yet all the difference between the occasional and the permanent heresies of the Christian church. The former are important only to the generation immediately concerned with them. The latter vex and disturb the faithful—using that term discriminately—in every age; and are, in effect, the tares suffered to grow together with the wheat, till the final harvest of souls. Every division of these indestructible forms of error will, sooner or later, be found to arrange itself under the banners of Antinomianism, and of Self-righteousness.

In the mean time, it is obvious that the two schemes are, in one view, utterly contrary to each other. The man who refuses to keep the Divine law is at the same moment jealous of his reputation for practical goodness. His character is that of an obedient rebel—of a virtuous libertine. Upon such inconsistencies are the children of the Fall precipitated by their own blindness!

But what has this to do with the object of this treatise? The Papal superstition, I answer, is, according to my estimation, nothing else than a magnificent vehicle for the two current heresies — I mean, as distinct from its endeavours to gain universal power. This will be developed hereafter. We will only observe at present, that Catholicity, like any other vast and complicated machine, must be contemplated in its actual operations. To a novice, indeed, in the ways of men, and especially of men who meddle with religion, the creed and ritual of the Latin church might appear absurd, yet perfectly innocent; and he might express surprise, in the common language of many wiser men than himself, that any very serious evil could lurk under periods so harmless as the decrees of the Council of Trent. What those decrees are, I, for one, never knew, except at second

hand, from divines employed in exposing or in covering their real character. But, at any rate, they are only parts of an engine which we must examine when *at work;* as we judge of the power of gunpowder, not as though it were an innocuous heap of black dust, but by its propelling force and explosions.

What, then, has the Church of Rome done? what is it doing? Its creed is of no sort of consequence: we are asking about its practice. Whatever be its doctrine, the great secret of its influence is, that it is so constructed as to suit all imaginable tastes. According to the eloquent and profound philosophy of Sir Edwin Sandys, "the particular ways they" (the Papists) "hold to RAVISH ALL AFFECTIONS AND TO FIT EACH HUMOUR (which their jurisdiction and power, being but persuasive and voluntary, they principally regard), are well-nigh infinite; there being not any thing either sacred or profane, no virtue nor vice almost, no things of how contrary condition soever, which they make not in some sort to serve that turn; that each fancy may be satisfied, and each appetite find what to feed on. Whatsoever either wealth can sway with the lovers of voluntary poverty, with the despisers of the world; what honour with the ambitious; what obedience with the

humble; what great employment with stirring and mettled spirits; what perpetual quiet with heavy and restive bodies: what content the pleasant nature can take in pastimes and jollity; what, contrariwise, the austere mind in discipline and rigour; what love either chastity can raise in the pure, or voluptuousness in the dissolute; what allurements are in knowledge to draw the contemplative, or in actions of state to possess the practic dispositions; what with the hopeful prerogative of reward can work; what errors, doubts, and dangers with the fearful; what change of vows with the rash, of estate with the inconstant; what pardons with the faulty, or supplies with the defective; what miracles with the credulous, what visions with the fantastical; what gorgeousness of shew with the vulgar and simple; what multitude of ceremonies with the superstitious and ignorant; what prayer with the devout; what with the charitable works of piety; what rules of higher perfection with elevated affections; what dispensing with breach of all rules with men of lawless conditions;—in sum, what thing soever can prevail with any man, either for himself to pursue or at leastwise to love, reverence, or honour in another (for even therein also man's nature receiveth

great satisfaction), the same is found with them; not, as in other places of the world, by casualty blended without order, and of necessity, but sorted in great part into several professions, countenanced with reputation, honoured with prerogatives, facilitated with provisions and yearly maintenance, and either (as the better things) advanced with expectation of reward, or borne with, how bad soever, with sweet and silent permission. What pomp, what riot, to that of their Cardinals? what severity of life comparable to their Hermits and Capuchins? Who wealthier than their Prelates? who poorer by vow and profession than their Mendicants? On the one side of the street a cloister of virgins; on the other, a sty of courtezans, with public toleration: this day all in masks, with all looseness and foolery; to-morrow all in processions, whipping themselves till the blood follow. On one door an excommunication, throwing to hell all transgressors; on another a jubilee, or full discharge from all transgressions. Who learneder in all kind of sciences than their Jesuits? what thing more ignorant than their ordinary Mass-Priests? What prince so able to prefer his servants and followers as the pope, and in so great multitude? Who

able to take deeper or readier revenge on his enemies? What pride equal unto his, making kings kiss his pantofle? what humility greater than his, shriving himself daily on his knees to an ordinary priest? Who difficulter in dispatch of causes to the greatest? who easier in giving audience to the meanest? Where greater rigour in the world in exacting the observation of the church laws? where less care or conscience of the commandments of God? To taste flesh on a Friday, where suspicion might fasten, were a matter for the Inquisition: whereas, on the other side, the Sunday is one of their greatest market-days. To conclude; never state, never government in the world, so strangely compacted of infinite contrarieties, all tending to entertain the several humours of all men, and to work what kind of effects soever they shall desire; where rigour and remissness, cruelty and lenity, are so combined, that, with neglect of the church, to stir ought is a sin unpardonable; whereas, with duty towards the church, and by intercession for her allowance, with respective attendance of her pleasure, no law, almost, of God or nature so sacred which one way or other they find not means to dispense with, or at leastwise permit

the breach of by connivance and without disturbance *."

But the powers of the imagination also shall be summoned, on this occasion, to aid a most righteous cause, by painting the malignity of its enemies; although the present is one of the few examples where fiction is outstripped by reality.

Who first taught souls enslav'd, and realms undone,
Th' enormous faith of many made for one?
Force first made conquest, and that conquest law,
Till superstition taught the tyrant awe;
Then shar'd the tyranny, then lent it aid,
And gods of conquerors, slaves of subjects made.
She, 'midst the lightning's blaze, and thunder's sound,
When rock'd the mountains, and when groan'd the ground,
She taught the weak to bend, the proud to pray
To Powers unseen, and mightier far than they;

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* Europæ Speculum, &c. 1629. 34—37. The citation is borrowed from "An Account of the Indexes, both prohibitory and expurgatory, of the Church of Rome, by the Rev. Joseph Mendham, M.A. 1826;"—a work unanswered, and in its own nature unanswerable; being the recorded, gratuitous evidence of the accused party against itself, and digested by the learned author from the very archives of the Vatican. His argument is not affected by the humiliating fact, that anti-papal churches virtually publish also *their* prohibitory and expurgatory indexes; and that the Bible itself is among the works judged to be unfit for general circulation, unless guarded by a commentary supplied by the distributor. So unequivocally has the main principle of the Reformation been abandoned; and by the successors of Cranmer and Calvin!

She, from the rending earth, and bursting skies,
Saw gods descend, and fiends infernal rise;
Here fix'd the dreadful, there the blest, abodes;
Fear made her devils, and weak hope her gods—
Gods partial, changeful, passionate, unjust,
Whose attributes were rage, revenge, and lust;
Such as the souls of cowards might conceive,
And, form'd like tyrants, tyrants would believe.
Then first the Flamen tasted living food,
Next his grim idol smear'd with human blood;
With Heaven's own thunder shook the world below,
And played the god an engine on the foe *.

But this was written concerning the sanguinary demonologies of the ancient world, and before life and immortality were brought to light by the Gospel. Yes; but with what terrible accuracy does it describe the perversions of Christianity by the see of Rome, when its prelates reigned in the fulness of their power, which they affected to have received from Jesus Christ! The accusations of history against the Papacy are, that it spoiled kingdoms and enslaved their inhabitants by its combined system of civil and religious despotism; founding its dominion alternately on brute force, and on assumptions of supernatural agency: sometimes pursuing its conquests by the poison-cup, the dagger, and the faggot; and then by pretending to

* Essay on Man, Epis. iii.

influence the phenomena of nature, as by arts of magic and sorcery;—that it made a heaven and a hell of its own, so far as to hold the keys of both; and to delude or alarm mankind, by allurements or threats drawn from its powers over the invisible world;—that it converted the God and Saviour of the Scriptures, and, with him, the mother of an incarnate Deity, and his early followers and martyrs, into so many ministers of fraud, licentiousness, vindictive passion, ambition, and avarice;—that it consummated its regulated system of crime by the establishment of the Inquisition, a scheme of guilt and cruelty unparalleled among mankind; and the inventor of which attained the devilish pre-eminence of having been, individually, the cause of more human misery, than ever resulted from the bloody practices either of ancient or modern idolatry. As there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth; so, by analogy, there was joy in hell, when it was whispered in the councils of darkness that a professed disciple of Jesus Christ was plotting to support his cause, by inflicting upon the enemies of THE CHURCH lingering tortures and death!

These are hard words; but I write them with entire deliberation. It lies upon the very surface of history, since the maturity of the Papal

conspiracy, that these hard words are those of truth and soberness. If at this present time, and during the suspension of a more cruel policy, the court of Rome continues to countenance the impious ceremonies practised by the Papal populace*; if it connives at the vulgar notions of the efficacy of the mass, penance, absolution, and extreme unction; if it does these things from a secret knowledge that they are essential to the existence of its supremacy —thus pandering, upon a settled system, to the depraved taste of its adherents—it is an insult to the common sense of mankind, and at the same time inexpressibly perfidious to the souls of men, to bring forward a smooth explanation of the abstract *doctrines* of Romanism; as though even the purest creed could expunge the crimes of its professors! Yet this has re-

* The descriptions of these, by such eye-witnesses as the authors of 'The Diary of an Invalid,' 'Rome in the Nineteenth Century,' and the 'Classical Tour'—though Mr. Eustace is an avowed advocate of the abominations so brilliantly disguised by the touches of his pencil—are assumed, except in the last instance, to be quite correct. Indeed, they have never been called in question; but, on the contrary, regarded as far short of the truth. The entire system *cannot be described;* and the reader of Mr. Blanco White's book must be sensible of the restrictions imposed upon a witness, who has seen what he dare not detail.—As to what may be observed of Popery *at home*, it is like looking at a wolf through the bars of a menagerie. In relation to its guilt, it is catching a distant view of the Palais Royale.

cently been done in the Declaration of the Roman-Catholic Bishops; and it was done long ago by Bossuet, whose book is little better than an unblushing attempt to render truth and falsehood convertible terms.

If, however, the principle were once admitted, that men are to be acquitted or condemned according to the integrity of their opinions, the very swindler, who holds up his hand at the Old Bailey, might defy all his prosecutors, and on the score that, whatever were his actions, he had composed a work on the elements of moral science, which would convince scepticism itself of his innocence and love of honesty. This would be, in fact, his appeal to his principles, the declaration of *his* faith; and, of course, his prosecutors must, in such case, either withdraw the indictment, or, otherwise, persist in the trial in the face of the most veritable confession ever presented to human examination.

For the recoil of many of the preceding accusations, the writer, as a Protestant, must prepare himself and his associates. This he will do hereafter; and in the attitude, not of a defendant, but of a confessor.

In one of the deepest strains of Cowper's moral music, he recommends peace among the

nations, on the ground of their common fellowship in sorrow:—

> Sure there is need of social intercourse,
> Benevolence, and peace, and mutual aid,
> Between the nations in a world that seems
> To toll the death-bell of its own decease.—
> Is it a time to wrangle, when the props
> And pillars of our planet seem to fail?
> ——————— But grant her end
> More distant, and that prophecy demands
> A longer respite, unaccomplish'd yet,
> Still 'tis but seemly, that, where all deserve
> And stand expos'd by common peccancy
> To what so few have felt, there should be peace,
> And brethren in calamity should love*.

We, therefore, the adherents, whether of the Catholic or Reformed communion, ought to cultivate mutual sympathy, on account of our being severally partakers of the guilt diffused among us all. Accordingly, in the present critical state of the Protestant earth, they who dwell there, and more especially the members of the northern and southern Establishments of Great Britain, should remember the obligation imposed on them, by their own anti-papal formularies, to put to silence, by well-doing, the ignorance of foolish men; and, by *such* arts of conciliation, to attempt the restoration of peace

* Task, Book ii.

among the belligerents of the Christian world. We have long since struck adversaries dumb, by speaking and by writing well. What remains to be effected is, to illustrate our doctrine by holiness of life. The public confessions of both churches are monuments of theological wisdom, although, in some points, not coincident with each other; at best, imperfect, and exposed to imputations of inconsistency. But one spirit animates both; and this is acknowledged by separatists, who secede on other grounds; as, for example, those of discipline, alliance with the state, and the use of liturgical books.

We, of the sister churches, loudly boast of creeds and rituals expurgated from the feculence and harlotry of Babylon. Therefore should our conduct be equally stainless; purified from all the legalized wickedness of the deserted hierarchy, and recalling the plea of certain of the early Christians: *Non magna eloquimur, sed vivimus.* If, indeed, an embassy were sent from Rome to ascertain what we *were*, the legate should properly be referred to the change wrought in public manners by the influence of the national faith. This would be in perfect accordance with the reply made by Jesus Christ to the disciples of his pre-

cursor: "Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up, and the poor have the Gospel preached unto them." The Messiah did not enter into a declamatory statement of his tenets, as though *that* were the evidence of his pretensions; but told the messengers to look at the fruits of his advent, and thence judge of his mission.

Now, are the members of our Episcopal and Presbyterian Establishments prepared to supply visible, tangible, testimony of the sincerity of their preference for the creed of the Reformation—to silence the recriminations of a monk or cardinal, who should look narrowly into their daily conduct, as bearing upon the personal, domestic, and social duties enjoined by the Christianity of the New Testament?

Then, to descend from the heights of Ecclesiastical Privilege to the lowlands and valleys of Dissent, let us further remind ourselves, that the seceders from our national churches have imposed upon themselves a superadded obligation to be purer; in correspondence to the strength of the arguments by which they have justified their separation. They profess to im-

prove upon the established branches of the Reformation; and, by consequence, are bound to live a *more* sober, righteous, and godly life in this present world, than can, under the relative circumstances of all parties, be expected from those with whose communions they are dissatisfied. At this point, we will pass by the Unitarians—as, in no intelligible sense, Christians—and pause at the assemblies of such separatists as preach the doctrines of the Thirty-nine Articles. Have *these*, then, a body of evidence ready to be advanced in their favour, and in default of testimony assumed not to be capable of being brought forward by our Establishments?

Very far am I from wishing to bring a direct accusation against either the Conformist or Nonconformist branches of the Christian family; but these things are said, to awaken us *all*—to provoke each other to jealousy—to examine whether we are in the faith; and not, by such inquiries, to increase the irritation already existing among those who own one and the same Saviour. We must say of ourselves, as we have said of our common opponents, What have we done? what are we doing? If Episcopalians, we may find it salutary to ask, whether, when we exult in a lineal descent from the Fathers of the English Church, our ancestors would

feel the glory or the shame of their posterity; and how far we may identify our own credit with such of our progenitors as resisted unto blood in an age of martyrs. If Dissenters, a parallel inquiry will arise, when we look back to the times of Howe and Baxter, of Henry or Watts, and ask ourselves, in what degree their successors have copied so great examples. In either case, are we "followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises?"

Before I close these introductory remarks—some of which too much anticipate what is said in the sequel—it may be expedient to add, in reference to the author's dark estimate of the religion of the times, that, if he is accused of writing bitter things against the world around him, he would ask, whether more defamatory charges are exhibited in these pages, than are thickly strewn throughout a thousand books, received among us as standard classics of the country—written by men who were neither religious alarmists, nor amateurs in reform; nor, in brief, other than have painted the manners of mankind with so much fidelity and spirit as, on that very account, to have gained a high station in the world's favour? What enthusiast ever uttered more severe declamation

against what *he* might call a *world lying in wickedness*—or what Dr. Johnson termed 'a world bursting with sin and sorrow'—than has been breathed by such statesmen as Bolingbroke and Walpole; or by such writers as the Youngs, Popes, Swifts, and Addisons of former days—including almost the whole of our dramatic literature—and by the Crabbes and Edgeworths of our own times? We say nothing of a certain order of living, fashionable novelists, whose popularity is an avowed acknowledgment of the justice of their poignant descriptions of depravity, as prevailing in the circles of modern society.

We study the portrait of human kind in Gulliver's Travels; in the fictions of Fielding and Smollet; in the Satires of the author of the Essay on Man; and in the Tales of the Hall; and are never wearied of contemplating the address of the artist, of admiring the strength of his outline, the depth of his colouring, and the management of his lights and shadows. But let a minister of religion tell all these graphic stories over again; let him describe, in the consecrated language of inspiration, men as they actually are, and, at the same time, *meaning* what he says; let him deliver his statements with the solemnity due to subjects of

such impressive import—for these things will not be trifled with, except by triflers—and we then witness the self-same world, which had previously submitted to the most severe castigation, rising with indignant surprise; as though they were then, for the first time, told that they *do* lie in wickedness; that they really *have* followed the devices and desires of their own hearts; offending against God's holy laws; and, assuredly, erring and straying from his ways like lost sheep! Till such surprise was awakened, we might have supposed that Swift and Fielding had painted their portraits of mankind only with the pencil of flattery; and that, instead of our hearing kings and their ministers declare such things, as that every man had his price, and that the giving away of a place offended ninety-nine candidates and made one ungrateful, we should only be regaled by anecdotes, illustrating the universal disinterestedness of our species, and our own native and indestructible virtue. Oh, how unconsciously and how laboriously does the world expose its own disgrace!

But why do men resent the fidelity of a pastoral address? Because, a servant of Jesus Christ frames his charges against his fellows and himself—for no faithful minister will ever

exclude his own case—not to amuse an audience with spirited sketches and caricatures, and to join in the laugh at his own success, but to call sinners to repentance! *This is his offence.* Yes, let the guilty deny it as they can, they hate the teacher who tells them what they are, *in order to their salvation.* They invite the satirist and the buffoon, in their own language, to 'shoot folly as it flies;' but, on the intelligible condition, that the children of folly shall be let alone, and even encouraged to pursue their course, without being disturbed by the warning, *Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish!*

If this statement be not unfaithful, it will more than justify all which is subsequently advanced on the spiritual desolation of this country. If inaccurate, the writer will be too happy to be taught better, by any person so conversant with the passing world as to be capable of assuring him that Antichrist has not yet gained that ascendancy over the public mind which it is one object of this treatise to describe. But we can expect no such herald of glad tidings.—And here, we border upon what appears, to such as seriously contemplate the signs of the times, the most portentous aspect of our religious discords,—the union of nominal Protestants with Papists in one Antichrist, in

a coalition against the pure doctrines of Christ crucified. The ambitious and intolerant Churchman, the intriguing and caustic Dissenter—both of them verbally attached to the Reformation—what would hinder characters such as these from joining the army of faith already gathering under the standard of the Vatican? They have all the same object; and that is, the repulsion of the hated Gospel from themselves, the release of an unquiet conscience from its spirituality and practical demands. They are the Antinomians crowded into every division of the Christian church. None are more opposed than these to the modes of living faith, where Luther and Calvin, Pascal and Melancthon, Cranmer and Knox, Leighton and Doddridge meet each other, as upon the neutral ground of the common salvation; leaving, on either border, every point of secondary importance in possession of such as aspire after nothing better. "Many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ; whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things."

Yet, of these, how many are there, who shout to each other, throughout all the regions of Christendom, THE TEMPLE OF THE LORD ARE WE!

CHAPTER I.

THE IDENTITY OF THE WORLD'S OPPOSITION TO RELIGION, IN ALL AGES.

All faiths beside, or did by arms ascend,
Or, sense indulged, have made mankind their friend;
This only doctrine does our lusts oppose,
Unfed by nature's soil, in which it grows;—
Cross to our interests; curbing sense and sin;
Oppressed without, and undermined within,
It thrives through pain; its own tormentors tires,
And with a stubborn patience still aspires. DRYDEN.

As this attempt offers itself chiefly, though not exclusively, to the consideration of the members of our two national communions—constituting, as these do, the majority of persons most nearly implicated in its discussions—I am anxious, at the outset, to explain the fact, as a kind of key to my general theory, *that the religion of Jesus Christ does not become, in the least degree, more acceptable to the human mind, when discovered to be interwoven with the creed*

and ritual of an established church. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him,"——no matter where he finds them.

If we are disgusted by any doctrine originally taught in the Scriptures, the mere circumstance of its having been adopted into a public confession, cannot possibly make it palatable. There is nothing to alter it in the process. If it retains not its primary tendency to offend, the shame of the Cross has so far ceased. But this will not, cannot be!

The Gospel, at its first appearance, made an open attack upon the opinions and ways of the world, and was resisted by the whole strength of the enemy. If the contest has ever since been maintained, it will not be denied, that what excited the hatred of mankind in the days of Jesus of Nazareth, must inevitably awaken the same feeling in the passing generation. Christianity has not lowered its terms; neither have its opponents been brought to submission.

By what art then, it may be asked, do men reconcile themselves to such doctrines and rules of life as are to be found in the books of *any* church — not excepting the Missal and the Breviary of the Latin communion, neither the

accredited writings of the Unitarians *,—while the very same doctrines and rules, if immediately drawn from the Bible, stir up their scorn and indignation? The shortest and most obvious answer to this inquiry is, that nothing is so easy as to substitute an ignorant and mercenary assent for belief and obedience. This is no new thing in ecclesiastical history.—The story of the Jewish Theocracy, with regard both to priests and people, is a perpetual illustration of the fact in question. The hierarchy, creed, ritual, and temple of Israel were established, according to direct inspiration. The church of the Holy Land was as the garden of the Lord, fertile and fragrant,—planted by his own right

* As, for example, those of Priestley, Belsham, and others of the same school; including the late 'Improved Version of the New Testament.' These books certainly inculcate higher lessons of morality and contempt of the world, than either their writers or readers are at all willing to practise; judging both parties by the general assumption, that men quarrel with the Decalogue rather than with the Creed. With regard to the Unitarian translation of the Christian Scripture, no artifice on the part of its interpreters has availed to confute the fact, that whatever be the *doctrine* of the Gospel, its practical system calls upon men to *deny ungodliness and worldly lusts; and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world;* a requisition quite as repulsive to such as disown the Divinity and Atonement of Jesus Christ, as to the Romanist, who virtually robs the Son of Man of his Godhead and propitiatory character, at the very moment when he professes to adore him, and to acknowledge the efficacy of his sacrifice.

hand—watered by the dews of heaven—protected from the incursion of the spoiler—and altogether possessing such a largeness of blessing as might once have seemed to prove the Divine determination to render it all permanent. The laity and their rulers, conscious of their high distinctions, became—strange as the expression may be, and more strange the infatuation it describes—vain of their religion; jealous, intolerant, and haughty; and, to all spiritual sin, adding every sensual enormity, till the measure of their iniquity was full.

All this time they were the chosen guardians of the law of God—of a rule forbidding all evil, and enforcing all good. And this was the church which at length crucified the Lord of Glory! To say that these men acted under judicial blindness, neither alters the facts of the case, nor, in any degree, excuses their guilt. They acted under no compulsion, but that of their own indulged passion and appetite.

If it be meant, indeed, to be covertly understood, that no parallel guilt can occur under the Christian economy, it may be well to remember the early pollutions of the church of Christ. We are accustomed idly to talk about the purity of primitive times, as though the Apostolic age were a pattern to all succeeding ones;

which we must be content to admire, but quite despair of equalling. How contrary is this to that most authentic of ecclesiastical annals, the Acts of the Apostles, as illustrated in the Apostolic Epistles, and in the Revelation of St. John!

The fact is legible on the very cover of these records, that the Gospel was no sooner delivered into the custody of mankind, than churches, planted and nurtured by the Apostles themselves, degenerated, in a few short years, into lukewarmness, strife, heresy, secularity, and all the practical atheism of the then obsolete Theocracy. A fresh lesson was thus gathered, on the insecurity inherent in every religious community, against error and crime—so far as its affairs were administered by mankind.

After this, examine the history of the church from the first century down to the present period; and it will be found to be one story, infinitely varied, but essentially the same—a description of the world's steady determination to retain the forms of Christianity and to crush its power.

We are fully aware of the jealousy and impatience which begin to ferment in the bosom of any nominal believer, when he feels that

his own church—whether established by law or opinion, and in any division of the civilized world—has its share of suspicion and disgrace. But, in truth, we *all* need humbling. We must endure to have our own native territories invaded—the sacred soil, as we fondly term it; and which, as we dream, sacrilege itself would never dare to approach.

This was precisely the popular feeling in the days of the Theocracy. Its subjects were the chosen generation, the royal priesthood, the peculiar people; so at least they thought themselves, and such they really were, as far as they obeyed their Divine Sovereign. This limit to their pretensions, however, they refused to acknowledge; and nothing so keenly exasperated this people, as the declaration of their own *faithful* prophets, that "he was not a Jew which was one outwardly." Worse than this, the sacerdotal order were the first to silence and persecute any teacher—though bearing, like themselves, the undisputed credentials of Heaven—who ventured to define the difference between a formalist and a believer.

In their own persons they would have resented, as an intolerable offence, even a look which threatened them with insult; but,—to

shew the universal inconsistency of human nature,—while they exposed a brother-dignitary to the hisses and execrations of the populace, they offered their own sacred character as a panoply against attacks upon *themselves*. They sat in Moses' seat; and, in their own case, insisted upon the honours due to his successors.

But, to enter more directly into the subject as concerning ourselves, who are now—I speak of our own enlightened and privileged country —as the garden of the Lord, let me remind the reader, that a question, addressed by Jesus Christ to his earliest followers, has, of late, been often repeated: "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" Whether this appeal were made in reference to his final advent, or to some intermediate manifestation of his person or power, is not our present inquiry*.

* On a subject open to so much discussion, as the one alluded to in the text, the Christian world will, of course, hold various, and probably irreconcileable, opinions. The most beneficial use of the doctrine will certainly be, to consider the Advent of Jesus Christ as always near to ourselves; for "*yet a little while*, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." The reader is recommended to study the subject in Stewart's 'Practical View of the Redeemer's Advent;' where inquisitive speculation is merged in the author's desire to teach the servants of their God and Saviour how

Supposing, however, that he *were*, at this time, to appear among us, and to visit the villages, towns, and cities of our domestic empire, in order to examine the spiritual character of their inhabitants, how few might those be, who would have any "confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming!" Yet ages have rolled away since the dawn of the Reformation; and it is become cause of public exultation, that we are walking in the noon-day light of its glory! We look aside upon the communion we have deserted, with a kind of compassionate contempt, as centuries behind us in the progress of intelligence and moral energy; while, among *ourselves*, "the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth!"

It is, nevertheless, at this very point of self-congratulation, that a serious mind pauses and trembles. Every national religion, whether connected with the state or otherwise *, will

they may welcome his appearance. It is too well known, that many professed advocates of spiritual religion have echoed the derisive clamours of its enemies, on a question which might at least teach wise men to be serious.

* As in the case of the United States of America; where the religion of the mother country is nationalised in its episcopal, and liturgical, and also in its congregational forms, although not recognised by law, except in a few of the States, and there only on general principles. But formality and barren orthodoxy are understood to prevail in

always be accompanied with the assumption, that profession is principle; and this in the very face of the inspired warning,—"Many are called, but few are chosen." I do not use these words in their controversial sense, whatever that may be, but as an intelligible and faithful description of the visible church.

My design is, to prove and illustrate the existing influence of anti-christian and of infidel principles, in every branch of the community, which yet appears to flourish beneath the shelter of the Cross. We have so long familiarized ourselves to set the mark of Antichrist exclusively on the Papal despotism, that the accusation implied in the mere mention of such a design may create strong feelings of surprise, and even of disgust, in many who will yet concur in the writer's conclusions, if they accompany his intermediate progress. There are great numbers, on the other hand, whose opinions, on the points under discussion, will derive no accession of strength from their present ally. They have anticipated all his movements; and will wonder why he has so

the Union, in much the same proportion as may be discovered among ourselves. If it were otherwise, we might calculate that the character of the human mind must be changed by time and place.

cautiously advanced upon the enemy's position.

With regard to the Roman-Catholic scheme itself, as distinct from the spiritualities of the Gospel, it is necessary for my purpose to express here, what has been already implied,—a decided conviction, that it is a system unaltered and unalterable. And this I state, upon its own internal evidence. If it be the religion of this world—and this is assumed throughout these pages—it is no more capable of change, than the passion of avarice or revenge, or any other form of human wickedness. The passion may be more or less active; but the principle remains entire, and is only quiescent in the absence of a temptation to display itself.

When, therefore, men speak of what they term the errors and absurd practices of Popery—as if it were nothing worse than a system of mistakes, and bad taste—it is plain, that they see only the surface, the thin crust covering a subterranean fire. Others look a little deeper; and, discerning something of its intolerance and cruelty, muse, perhaps, for a moment, on certain contingent dangers to their civil interests, speculate upon shadowy consequences, and then retire to their usual pursuits. After these comes the theological student, proving

the inconsistency of the tenets and discipline of the Romanist with the doctrine and economy of the primitive church; and who, having gone through the usual course of the controversy, signs an armistice, and returns to his quarters.

In the mean time, the main point has been untouched. The disputants have not argued the matter as really affecting the great inquiry, *What must I do to be saved?* They have not opposed the apostate church, as directly sustaining a scheme ruinous to their own everlasting salvation.

Besides this, we go delusively upon the supposition, that all is right among ourselves. This is the very assumption condemned in the other party. The fact is, that the spirit of Antichrist is co-extensive with the limits of the visible church. It often reigns and revels, where its influence is least suspected or acknowledged. It is of *catholic*, of universal power. If it flits along the aisles and nave of the cathedral, it crawls also on the floor of the conventicle,—at once an aspiring and a grovelling spirit.

Add to this, that it assumes the forms of infidelity; watching, with exultation, the follies and crimes of the Christian church, strengthened and refreshed by the sight, and meditating wider conquests. Antichrist is, however,

most triumphant when it unites the infidel and the Protestant in the same person; when, for example, the man who defends an established communion, and angrily resists all dissent from its regulations, is, in reality, a disbeliever of the Gospel itself.

That such characters as the one described exist, actually *professing* infidelity, is not asserted. It would be, in them, the extravagance of impolicy, to avow their principles. We speak of the *practical* unbeliever—the apologist for Christianity, who has not abandoned a single vice, whether mental or sensual, nor sought after a single virtue; but, in point of fact, remains the same person as he would have been, had Jesus Christ never proclaimed the revelation which this man aspires to defend. We might have said, the practical *atheist* *; but this term is yet more offensive. But why more offensive? What definable difference, as to any influential purpose, is there between two

* 'Atheism,' said Mr. Cecil, 'is a characteristic o. our day. On the sentiments, manners, pursuits, amusements, and dealings of the great body of mankind, there is written in broad characters, *without God in the world!*' This is using "great plainness of speech;" but not greater than become his office, when describing, as a minister of God, the spiritual state of such persons as are enlightened by the knowledge of the Gospel, but refuse it their obedience. "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"

designations, each of them describing an individual who *lives* without God in the world? Would that all who call themselves members and upholders of our own establishments, or seceders from those communions on the plea of seeking a purer society, asked themselves the previous question, whether they are, indeed, believers in Christ crucified! There is a certain occult, insinuating infidelity, which undermines the soul, without exciting alarm; imperceptible in its progress, and therefore more successful, and more perilous. By this enemy fell the infidel formalists of the Theocracy; and, in our own times, the self-same adversary has thinned the ranks of the church throughout the Protestant world.

CHAPTER II.

APPLICATION OF THE PRINCIPLE TO THE PRESENT STATE OF SOCIETY.

Say not—and if the thought of such defence
Should spring within thy bosom, drive it thence—
What nation among all my foes is free
From crimes as base as any charged on me?
Their measure fill'd, they too shall pay the debt,
Which God, though long forborne, will not forget;
But know that wrath Divine, when most severe,
Makes justice still the guide of his career;
And will not punish, in one mingled crowd,
Them without light, and thee without a cloud!

COWPER.

IN pursuing the subject of the foregoing chapter, we may revert to the assertion—and the repetition of it will be forgiven by such as own its truth and pressing importance—that *the religion of Jesus Christ does not become, in the least degree, more acceptable to the human mind, when discovered to be interwoven with the creed and ritual of an established church.* It would be highly inexpedient to bring positive proof

of this fact, as furnished by the present state of society, though it might be sufficiently supplied from a very limited intercourse with the living world. Neither will we search for evidence to the same point, in such volumes of controversy as might amply afford all the recorded testimony we want.

We will only select an illustration from a well-known biography; disclosing, as one among a thousand instances, what even divines may really think, when they speak their minds in a social circle; and forget, for the time, the doctrines delivered on the last Sunday in the desks and pulpits of their own communion.—' Dr. Johnson surprised Mr. Henderson not a little, by acknowledging, with a look of horror, that he was much oppressed by the fear of death. The amiable Dr. Adams suggested that God was infinitely good. JOHNSON: "That he is infinitely good, as far as the perfection of his nature will allow, I certainly believe; but it is necessary for good upon the whole, that individuals should be punished. As to an *individual*, therefore, he is not infinitely good; and as I cannot be *sure* that I have fulfilled the conditions on which salvation is granted, I am afraid I may be one of those who shall be damned" — looking dismally. Dr. ADAMS:

"What do you mean by damned?" JOHNSON—passionately and loudly—"Sent to hell, sir, and punished everlastingly." Dr. ADAMS: "I don't believe that doctrine." JOHNSON: "Hold, sir: do you believe that some will be punished at all?" Dr. ADAMS: "Being excluded from heaven will be a punishment; yet there may be no great positive suffering." JOHNSON: "Well, sir; but if you admit any degree of punishment, there is an end of your argument for infinite goodness, simply considered; for infinite goodness could inflict no punishment whatever. There is not infinite goodness, physically considered; morally, there is." BOSWELL: "But may not a man obtain such a degree of hope, as not to be uneasy from the fear of death?" JOHNSON: "A man may have such a degree of hope as may keep him quiet. You see I am not quiet, from the vehemence with which I talk; but I don't despair." Mrs. ADAMS: "You seem, sir, to forget the merits of our Redeemer." JOHNSON: "Madam, I do not forget the merits of my Redeemer; but my Redeemer has said, that he will set some on his right hand, and some on the left." He was in gloomy agitation, and said, "I'll have no more on't." If what has been now stated,' says the reporter of this conver-

sation, 'should be urged by the enemies of Christianity, as if its influence on the mind were not benignant, let it be remembered, that Johnson's temperament was melancholy; of which such direful apprehensions of futurity are often a common effect *.'

Now, according to the estimate attempted in this volume, of the religion of the present times, the above discussion, which took place about four-and-forty years since, may stand as a specimen of the world's current opinions on the eternal state.

Let a man, of Johnson's masculine and unbending mind, avow, in the circles of to-day, his dread of death,—will not such an avowal be received by the Hendersons † around him

* Boswell's Life of Johnson. 1804. iv. 321.—The last hours of Dr. Johnson, which have been described with confusion and inconsistency by his various biographers, have received an excellent illustration in the Christian Essays of the Rev. S. C. Wilks; whose statements are fully corroborated in the Christian Observer for January 1828 (pp. 32, 33), by the Rev. C. I. Latrobe. The information is late, but most welcome; although we cannot but lament that it has been so long delayed.

† In this application of the name of Mr. Henderson, the author begs to observe, that it is used on this occasion only by way of adaptation to the course of the narrative. That eminent person, who died in the prime of his days, was by no means to be classed with men of a sceptical character. Such, at least, are my recollections of him; as described to me, many years since, by an excellent Christian, with whom he lived on terms of intimacy. A portrait of Mr. Henderson is in possession of Mrs. H. More, who knew him well.

with something, perhaps, beyond "not a little surprise;" with an incredulous, sarcastic smile; as if they were listening to the reveries of a fanatic? Then may follow some professional person, too *amiable* to own the God of the Scriptures in his attribute of justice, and as one who will by no means clear the guilty; and, in consequence of this false view of the Divine character, pleading infinite goodness, as though no man could perish; then inquiring, with surprise, what could be meant by such a term as damnation; then flatly denying the doctrine of future punishment, or arguing that the loss of happiness might be a very tolerable evil!

In the next place, might appear a professor of literature, trying to soothe all fears of what may come after death, by talking about hope, without in the least defining the ground of such hope. After him advances a fourth person in the company, flying to the shelter of Antinomianism—that natural and universal refuge of minds suspicious of their own guilt—and perverting the doctrine of Redemption; as though Jesus Christ could indiscriminately save all mankind, and not confine the efficacy of an infinite satisfaction to those only who "truly repent, and unfeignedly believe his holy Gospel." Lastly, might possibly offer himself to

the discussion some admired writer on the evidences of Christianity; who, in his chapter on the benignity of the Messiah, had opposed what he called the harsh notion, that the New Testament contained severities and threatenings inconsistent with a mild dispensation and mitigated law. And so the party would continue to sleep on, and take their rest!

The evident object in such a discussion would be, so to explain away the demands of Christianity as to prevent them from interfering with the pleasures and schemes of the world; in fact, to repel the Gospel as an intruder. The enemies of practical religion, it is true, are always complaining of what they term the dangerous doctrines preached by certain among our public instructors; but their real quarrel is with the *holiness* consequent upon these same doctrines. They are afraid of being robbed of their licence to live as they please; afraid of incurring loss of *caste*, in a world where they wish still to stipulate for their share of its profits and delights. They may consent to an observance of an established ritual; but on the understood condition, that nothing acknowledged in the ceremonial of the first day of the week shall interrupt the course of indulgence pursued on other days; neither, indeed, forbid

the pleasurable scheme reserved for the afternoon and evening of the Sabbath; when they have purchased, according to their own calculation, a right to the expected enjoyment, by a morning attendance on public worship.

When men of this class hear a clergyman say to them on the Sunday, "Remember to keep holy the Sabbath-day; thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain: thou shalt not kill; nor commit adultery; neither steal, nor lie, nor covet;"—and when, on hearing such mandates, they voluntarily beseech God to *incline their hearts to keep these laws*, it is asked, whether these petitioners, and these admirers of our Liturgy, really *mean* to consecrate the sacred day to devotional purposes; to abstain from a repetition of the profaneness of the past week; to mortify their angry and sensual passions; to become really honest, honourable, and generous; and seriously to continue their prayers, that God would melt their unwilling hearts into obedience?

Now, when such inquiries are made, are they directed only to offenders occupying the lowest stations of the community, or do they criminate also their superiors?—We will, however, retire, for the present, from the refined circles of literature and theology, to abodes where ima-

ginative moralists have taught us to seek for primeval innocence and virtue.—They have left out of their account the circumstance of man's universal ignorance and depravity; and of the *pauper's* resistance also to the demands of the religion of Christ.

Few things are more affecting to a serious mind, than the scene exhibited in what Dr. Johnson calls—in his pensive stanzas on the death of Robert Levet—" misery's darkest cavern," when the Christian visitor finds Antichrist reigning even *there;* when he discovers that the spirit of an infidel world is no more a stranger in a hovel, than in the saloons of fashion, or in the schools of theology; that Lazarus may lie at the gate full of sores, dying in the extremity of human wretchedness, and, at the same time, impenitent and obdurate; spending his latest breath in curses, and passing out of the miseries of time into the bitter pains of eternal death. This is not sketched from imagination, but from reality; in a case which came under the author's professional notice. Neither is it mentioned here as an extraordinary instance of human misery and guilt; except, that the outward circumstances of the party described were more than usually loathsome and revolting. In other examples, there is a

less disgusting exterior; while all within appears to exhibit equal obduracy. The person in question had been, for many years, a regular attendant at church.

In contemplating such affecting illustrations of the state of this country, it might seem impossible for any man of a serious mind, and especially if a minister of religion, to waste his time, talents, and learning in debating the minor differences of opinion and discipline existing in the church,—and always certain to exist, unless the Christian world should be awakened from its dreams by some extraordinary effusion of the Spirit of God,—instead of endeavouring to rescue the impenitent multitudes around us from the wrath which they are treasuring up against "the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God!" But, alas! the time is not yet arrived when unanimity, in this view, can be expected.

It is surprising that certain Christian philanthropists, who interest themselves about the causes, effects, and cure of pauperism, should appear to be so ignorant of the spiritual destitution of the poor, either in our villages or thickly-peopled manufacturing towns. With regard to our agricultural population, I can only say, that, as far as my own experience and ob-

servation extend, *their* religion, if so vague a thing be at all capable of description, consists generally in an undefined, shadowy, evanescent notion of the existence and might of a Deity, the author of nature, and the ruler of the world which he made. His *value* is recognised by them almost exclusively in his being able to give aid in family difficulties; and it is assumed, that he will do this, as the act of a beneficent and potent Being, who furnishes perpetual evidence of his good will, by causing the seasons to pursue their regular course, and to produce the fruits of the earth for the use of man. Their faith is, in fact, much the same as the rude theism usually found among barbarized nations *.

* In Foster's 'Essay on the Evils of Popular Ignorance,' the reader may find the subject examined with an originality, strength, and accuracy peculiar to that eminent writer. The third, fourth, and fifth sections should be particularly studied—for they cannot be read superficially—by every person who is at all anxious for the welfare of his country; and who would estimate what might be expected, in any national convulsion, from a populace generally sunk in irreligion and debauchery. Few persons will, probably, be prepared to follow Mr. Foster in the entire system of what he proposes in the shape of reform; but on the fidelity of his statements respecting the evils which require a remedy, there can be but one opinion, among such persons as are at all familiar with what is called humble life. The work now recommended seems to have attracted far less notice than its author's previous volumes of essays. To myself it appears to be essential to the library of a Christian patriot.

It is true that, added to this general consciousness of the being of a Creator, are certain opinions which have been gathered from the Bible, public worship, and other common sources of religious knowledge. But the first notion—that of *a benevolent and omnipotent Deity*—predominates strongly over these opinions. A theorist, who has not made the experiment, cannot possibly imagine the profound and—by human means—utterly impenetrable ignorance which darkens the minds of the majority of those persons who have even read the Scriptures, attended church with considerable regularity, and obtained credit as men by no means deficient in sagacity and good sense. Their altar might be inscribed,—TO THE UNKNOWN GOD.

To such patriots as question the fairness of this statement, we will offer another mode of evidence in the *living manners* of this people. Alas! the purity, benevolence, honesty, openness, industry, and sobriety of the lower classes bear a fearful correspondence to the nullity of their faith. Their profligacy is the natural consequence of their ignorance—that is, emphatically, of their ignorance of God as revealed in the Gospel, and only accessible to sinners through the mediation of Jesus Christ. As a

further consequence, they are generally insensible to the fear of death; and either incredulous as to a state of future punishment, or so deluded in regard to their own characters, as to have no apprehension of their liability to perish everlastingly. If, when the shadows of the grave begin to thicken around them, they become indeed disquieted with the suspicion that they possibly *are* in danger of being lost, their clergy are asked to dispel the gloom by an administration of the sacrament; and all is then considered to be safe.

Novelists and painters of rustic manners have long amused mankind by their graphic descriptions of the superstitious opinions and observances of villagers; and if such sentiments and customs never interfered with the truths offered to their attention in the Gospel, it would be so far well. But it is otherwise. The libertines of low life are found to resemble, in the prostration of their minds before dreams and omens,

> The godless Regent, trembling at a star,

being, like him, more afraid of some of the common phenomena of physical nature, than of the God whom they would seem to defy in the daily course of their lives.

They also are apt to judge of the after-state of the soul by the circumstances of death. I remember, as one illustration of this, with what agony of mind a woman once implored my sympathy, because her sister struggled hard with the last enemy in her dying hours: had *she died like a lamb*, her salvation might have been judged to be secure! Such delusion is the more deplorable, since it is too obvious that numbers of bad men expire with perfect serenity; they "have no bands in their death:" while many a penitent believer trembles on the borders of the invisible world, though *he* need not fear to enter it!

Now, in making this melancholy report, I am supported by the concurrent testimony of all those among my clerical friends who have most assiduously devoted themselves to the care of souls. Their complaints are lamentable; and, as they describe districts which, in many cases, have been long blessed by the supervision of faithful and laborious ministers, what appalling disclosures might not be made of the spiritual desolation and death of parishes, either neglected or erroneously taught by their appointed instructors!

But while these things are brought forward, as indicating the religious opinions and conduct

of the lower classes, it would be the most pernicious flattery to assume—and this has already been intimated—that matters improve as we ascend the scale of society. In the concerns of the life to come, there is a certain vulgarity of thinking, common alike to plebeian and patrician, to the illiterate and the learned. The recent and rapid advances of the human mind in physical, intellectual, and even ethical science, have been attended with no progress in the knowledge of the faith of Christ. Our divines may have increased in numbers and in theological attainments; and if theology could communicate principle as well as knowledge, the path to heaven would widen, and be thronged by multitudes. But the way is still narrow; and the gate is yet strait!

The world will allow us to say this officially; to read it in the lesson of the day; and to amplify the solemn saying in a sermon. But if we *mean* what we preach, and awaken men's belief of our sincerity in the interval between one Sunday and another, then begins the debate between a minister and his flock. So long as he is not missing in the circles of pleasure, he may deliver, without suspicion, the most fearful warnings of God against a slumbering world; and none will molest him.

But the moment his own example comes in aid of his doctrine, and irritates the consciences of those around, his creed is discovered to be false and foolish. The real offence, however, is not in the doctrine, but—we repeat it—in its practical consequences.

To return from this brief digression to the fact, that, in genuine religion, all ranks are either stationary or retrograde, notwithstanding what may be called the forced march of intellect: If I am asked for proof of an accusation so serious and extensive, I will appeal to the current literature of these times; and specially to the productions of the periodical press.

The mind of a nation, so highly cultivated as our own, and so incessantly displaying itself on paper, will be best understood by remarks strewed, as by accident, throughout books on subjects not properly religious. They are the light straws, indicating the quarter of the wind.

But was not the literature of former periods characterized by irreligion and unsound theories of morals? This might be, and certainly was, the case; and to a very lamentable extent. But I think that the age, for example, of Addison, was distinguished rather by deficiency than by hostility, in respect to genuine Christianity. The writers of his time did not go out

of their way to indulge in sarcasms against men more serious than themselves. In fact, the profession of religion was not so common—so intrusive upon the world, as it is now. In the present day, it meets men at so many points, that they cannot avoid it. Hence we find, where they cannot properly be expected, incidental sneers at our religious institutions; attempts to lower the character and deny the success of missionaries; derision of such Christian philanthropists at home, as exert themselves to moralize and reform the reprobates around them; effusions of contempt against faithful and laborious ministers of Jesus Christ, particularly against those of the Established Church, who preach and live most consistently with their ordination vows;—endeavours to multiply and extend dissipating, licentious, and cruel amusements; and to laugh down every one who interferes with these things, though he does this in direct obedience to the laws of his country. Such, and similar efforts, are scattered among the literary productions which perpetually emerge into public notice.

We would ask any man, not disposed to trifle with the bearing of such a question, whether the many volumes which he may annually look through, as they circulate among the members

of his book-club, appear to proceed from writers who cordially embrace the religion of Jesus Christ; or—to soften the inquiry, and afford the accused opportunity of defence—whether these authors preserve, on this point, an inoffensive neutrality; or—in order to give them another way of escape—whether they abstain from all active aggression against their own professed faith?

We are not speaking of infidels, but, generally, of adventurers for literary credit; who, at least, so far consult the public taste, as to be cautious not to write what may have a tendency to disgust. Yet novelists, whose mighty influence reigns absolutely over the reading population — poets, perhaps of equal power — travellers and voyagers—biographers—historians —the antiquarian and bibliomaniac—politicians and economists—men of science, and professors of the fine arts—how very few of all these but what incidentally betray their jealousy of the interference of the Gospel of the Son of God with the maxims and manners of this world!

To particularize would be endless, and indeed useless. Examples would not convince the incredulous; neither are they wanted to confirm such readers as have anticipated these observations.

We will therefore pass over this division of the subject to the department of the periodical press — an engine which now seems to regulate all the movements of society. None but the avowed man of pleasure—using that term in obedience to the world's system of sheltering sin under soft names—will deny, nor refuse to condemn, the licentiousness of our newspapers, now become the necessary appendage to every family circle *. And yet, rarely does there appear a single number of these prints which is throughout fit to be read by the members of a Christian household.

But what does this awful state of things discover? Why, it evidently shews the moral degradation of that nation which it is the busi-

* The establishment of Sunday newspapers, encouraged by all classes of society to an extent fearful to contemplate, may be regarded as a branch of the infidel press; and more efficient in proportion to its zeal, in certain instances, to support the monarchy and national churches of this empire. According to the undisputed principle, that no enemy is so injurious as a false friend—one, at least, of the Sunday journals has, for years, been employed in undermining our episcopal communion, by affecting to be a kind of clerical guide; while, at the same time, it has pursued, with unrelenting hate, all who spend and are spent for the present and eternal good of their countrymen. And this is done from Sabbath to Sabbath, as under the eye of God; and in defence of a liturgy in which, when the minister has read the Fourth Commandment, we profess to pray, *Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law!* Whether this be not a branch of the infidel press, is an inquiry which instantly obtrudes its own answer.

ness of editors to describe; and as plainly indicates the taste of that reader which it becomes beneficial to them to gratify. When we complain of a polluted newspaper, we are, in reality, implicating the people whom it represents.

In animadverting upon the monthly and quarterly journals—claiming, as these do, a high and commanding station in the empire of letters—it might be sufficient to state, that, of our quarterly bodies of criticism, the elder-born never professed even the forms of Christianity; the second, under the banners of the Church, has frequently been auxiliary to the powers of infidelity, in deriding all practical religion; while a third has openly opposed the national creed and hierarchy; and, in various instances, fought in the same ranks with its rival and immediate predecessor.

The minor efforts of the periodical press shall not be noticed, further than to assert, that, if there be one among them which consistently advocates the cause of the Gospel, as a scheme of spiritual duty and consolation, and as meant to exhibit, in its sincere adherents, a course of thinking and conduct at variance with the pretensions of nominal believers—such a publication is denounced as forming a schism

among the otherwise united friends of the world, and the world's unalterable principles.

What has now been said proceeds on the assumption that our literature is a correct index of public sentiment. If this be conceded, the author's estimate of the religion of the times cannot surely be considered as otherwise than equally accurate; and the testimony itself is more important, as coming under the head of circumstantial evidence.

CHAPTER III.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.—THE AUTHOR'S PERSONAL APOLOGY.

I consider the principal enemies of the Gospel to be, not the pontiff of Rome, nor heretics, nor seducers, nor tyrants, but bad Christians; because the former exert their rage out of the church; while drunkenness, luxury, perjury, blasphemy, impurity, adultery, and other abominable vices overthrow it, and expose it defenceless to the rage of our enemies. Rome does not constitute the principal object of my fears: I tremble on account of other enemies, more dangerous. Of what importance is it to have driven away the wolves from the fold, if the pest ravage the flock?—CALVIN.

IF the heavy accusation advanced in preceding details be just, it cannot be otherwise than inferred, that we, the children of the Reformation, and members of the two chief Protestant Establishments of Europe, have slender cause for boasting of our lineage and immunities. We expose ourselves—and the enemy is not tardy in availing himself of the advantage so liberally afforded him—to the taunt, What has the Reformation done for you? We can all answer the question, Where was your religion before

Luther? It might be more embarrassing to be asked now, Where has been your religion *since* Luther?

But the first of these three questions either remains to be resolved, or must be otherwise met with a certain reserve and caution, such as naturally will create a smile on the countenance of a generous opponent. Whatever be our doctrinal purity, yet opinions, as such, are of no value. If they mature into principles, the fruit will soon be seen; and the objector be at once silenced. But the defensive plea of the Romanist is, that the fruit does *not* appear; and the infidel by-stander laughs at both parties, and reminds himself of the avowal of one of St. Peter's successors*, *How profitable is this fable*—But I will not repeat the rest of the sarcasm. It is sufficient to our purpose to be aware of the triumph ingloriously given to an ungodly world, when it discerns the heart of an atheist under the vesture of an ecclesiastic.

Another circumstance is also, in this view, brought to our recollection,—the surprise of the modern heathen at *our* anxiety to convert him to the Christian faith; that is, to a religion which he accuses us of professing without be-

* Leo the Tenth.

lieving, or, at least, without yielding it our obedience; and he ironically assures us, that our own consistency is a proof of its value; for, in this relation, the Gospel, he tell us, is its own witness. There is no answering such objectors, but by the honest confession, that our religion has always been, and ever will be—unless in an age of Millennial glory—far more disgraced than honoured by the conduct of its advocates. All attempts to hide our shame, will only serve to increase the scoffer's suspicion and contempt.

Many well-meaning apologists have indeed endeavoured to rescue our credit from the sneers of such men as Gibbon and Voltaire; by arguing that the persecutions and religious wars consequent upon the establishment of Christianity in modern Europe were not really so malignant and bloody as infidels have represented. But why not own at once the full amount of the charge, and at the same time assure the unbeliever—what he knows already, if he ever read the New Testament—that Jesus Christ actually foretold such things, as the infallible consequence of his mission into a world, where he came not to bring peace but a sword? *

* 'Unbelievers seldom choose to attack Christianity as it

It appears indeed, if I may so express myself, that Christ was determined, from the beginning, that the credit of his religion should be entirely independent of human support; that He would ultimately subdue the world, and beat down all enemies under his feet, by his own Divine energy, without the least succour from his creatures, otherwise than as he chose to employ them as the passive and imperfect instruments of his pleasure. And this might shew us, were we willing to learn wisdom at

is drawn in the sacred writings, and exemplified in the lives of real Christians, who stand at a distance from worldly parade, political struggles, or state intrigues; but as it is corrupted and abused by worldly men. Mr. Paine racks his imagination to make out a resemblance between the heathen mythology and Christianity. While he is going over the ground of Christianity, as instituted by Christ and his Apostles, the resemblance is faint indeed! He therefore hastens to corrupted Christianity; and here he finds plenty of materials. "The statue of Mary," he says, "succeeded the statue of Diana of Ephesus. The deification of heroes changed into the canonization of saints. The mythologist had gods for every thing: the Christian mythologists had saints for every thing. The church became as crowded with the one, as the pantheon had been with the other; and Rome was the place of both." Very true, Mr. Paine; but you are not so ignorant as to mistake this for Christianity. Had you been born and educated in Italy or Spain, you might have been excused in calling this *the Christian theory*. Such conduct, however, teaches us to defend nothing but the truth as it is in Jesus. Your directing your artillery against its corruptions and abuses betrays a consciousness, that the thing itself, if not invulnerable, is yet not so easy of attack.'—*Fuller's Gospel its own witness. Introduction.*

the fountain-head, the injury done to the Christian cause by keeping out of sight the distinction between the wise and the foolish, the chaff and the wheat, the wheat and the tares, as descriptive of the visible church; in which, as our own Confession declares, the 'evil be ever mingled with the good, and sometimes the evil have chief authority in the ministration of the word and sacraments *.'

Yet, in the very teeth of this faithful avowal, what numbers among us, both lay and clerical, redden with indignation at any scheme of doctrine which brings their sincerity into question; as if the present generation of the Christian church were exempt from all liability to such self-deception as, in every age, has characterized the human mind! As far as men are thus deluded, we need not wonder at their tenacious adherence to the Antinomian theory of baptismal regeneration; which, notwithstanding all explanation, soothes the baptized into a persuasion of their security, and discourages examination of their spiritual character.

Exactly the same delusion diffuses itself around the sacramental table, when communicants approach its mysteries as another source of safety from future evil, without first in-

* Art. XXVI.

quiring, whether they go thither in the character of friends, or enemies, to the Son of God. These things are essentially antichristian. But I will anticipate the discussion no farther. In the succeeding pages, my endeavour will be to prove and illustrate the transfer of the apostasy of Antichrist from the Papal to the Protestant church; the revival of exploded heresies, under new names; and the increase of guilt incurred, by perpetually declaiming against Antichrist, while practically obeying him.

Having, from local considerations, read a variety of Roman-Catholic writings, as well as much of the current controversy, I must, of course, feel more painfully than such as have less meddled with the subject, the sad deficiency of our Protestant apologists, in that they so generally neglect to arm themselves for the combat with the "sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God;" and besides this, that they have argued the question on the ground of political expediency, and its connexion with the prosperity of a rival church.

If these writers are ecclesiastics, they never can rise above the dignity of prize-fighters; and their zeal is nothing better than a scramble for higher preferment, or a dread of losing what

is already in possession. If lay-defenders, they have interests and prepossessions interwoven with the alliance between church and state; and which would very easily be disentangled, if the confederacy in question were dissolved. In either instance, the controversy is by no means a religious one.

As to the political part of the dispute, I will interfere no further, than to observe, in passing, that the Papal system is, in my own apprehension, so necessarily hostile to the native rights of mankind, that, on merely civil principles, I regard it with indignation and abhorrence. Its elements are despotism and intolerance; and no man can be secure of freedom, property, or life, wherever it is dominant. How far this opinion affects the question of Catholic emancipation, or the necessity of curtailing the power of any Protestant communion, shall be left to another's decision; as I am especially anxious to escape the contagion of party.

Some apology may be due to such of the author's personal friends, as may feel disturbed by the hard measure dealt out in these papers to their hereditary religion; but he is confident that they will do him the justice to remember, that in hours of social intercourse, when subjects of controversy were introduced, he never

opposed them in the character of a clergyman of a certain branch of the Reformed Church—as though he were aiming to remove the attributes of infallibility from Rome to Canterbury—but, most expressly, as one professing to believe in the Christianity of the New Testament, as it came fresh and uncontaminated from the lips of the Author of the *common salvation;* and before men, either from good or bad intentions, had drawn it from its original source, and mingled it with human creeds *. I am convinced that this is the only effectual way of arriving at spiritual truth.

My friends must also be aware—at least I hope they are—that, unequivocally as they have heard me oppose the vicious part of their system, I never denied the sincerity, and of course never questioned the safety, of such inhabitants

* Soame Jenyns saw the difficulty of doing this; but his View of the Internal Evidences of the Gospel would have been proportionately conclusive, had he earnestly endeavoured to contemplate his subject in the abstract. He says, 'What pure Christianity is, divested of all ornaments, appendages, and corruption, I pretend not to say. To ascertain the true system, and genuine doctrine of this religion, after the undecided controversies of above seventeen'—and now eighteen—'centuries, and to remove all the rubbish which artifice and ignorance have been heaping upon it, during all that time, would indeed be an arduous task, which I shall by no means undertake.' Then, upon which, among the many human modifications of the Gospel, did he build his own hopes of salvation!

of the mystic Babylon as, being taught of God, and by his sovereign grace enabled to separate the precious from the vile, have worked out their own salvation, though constrained to remain among the abominations of idolatry. *They* may reach the port in safety, while the billows they have escaped, and all the neighbouring coasts, are covered with wrecks *.

At the same time, it is a very serious question for Catholics dwelling in the light of the Reformation, or rather of the Gospel itself, to examine, how far their refusal to abjure their own form of anti-christianity will be their defence, in the great and terrible day of the Lord. The infidelity of the nominal Protestant

* 'My censures of the Papists,' writes Baxter, 'do much differ from what they were at first: I then thought that their errors on the doctrines of faith were their most dangerous mistakes. But now, I am assured that their mis-expressions, and misunderstanding us, with our mistakings of them, and inconvenient expressing our own opinion, hath made the differences in these points to appear much greater than they are. But the great and irreconcileable differences lie in their church tyranny and usurpations, and in their great corruptions and abasement of God's worship, together with their befriending *vice* and *ignorance*. At first I thought that Mr. Perkins well proved, that a Papist cannot go beyond a reprobate; but I now doubt not but that God hath many sanctified ones among them, who have received the true doctrine of Christianity so practically, that their contradictory errors prevail not against them, to hinder their love of God, and their salvation: but that their errors are like a conquerable dose of poison, which nature doth overcome.'—*Reliquiæ Baxterianæ*. 1696. 131.

cannot possibly contribute to such defence, as all parties must bear the consequences of their own guilt.

It is painful, at this point, to call to recollection the treacherous compliments paid by certain of our anti-catholic writers to their opponents. They compile long, elaborate, and, in a great degree, useful treatises, intended to expose and annihilate the pretensions of Antichrist; and yet make a low obeisance, in the concluding paragraphs, as if all they had previously said were of no very great consequence, since they and their opponents will finally meet in the same heaven.

Then why, it may well be asked, do these writers take so much pains to refute the Papists, if, after all, both parties are to tread different ways, and yet be equally happy at last? I always thought, that we of the Reformed faith should endeavour to convert Catholics, lest these last should *not* obtain a celestial inheritance; and, in reality, if this be not our object, the whole controversy is of no more importance than a debate on the national debt, or any other question terminating on this side eternity.

CHAPTER IV.

EMBARRASSMENTS ATTENDING THE PRESENT DISCUSSION.

Religion has treated knowledge sometimes as an enemy, sometimes as a hostage; often as a captive, and more often as a child; but knowledge has become of age; and religion must either renounce her acquaintance, or introduce her as a companion, and respect her as a friend.—COLTON.

HAVING ventured, in former chapters, to offer a general estimate of the state of religion among ourselves, as members of the Protestant church, I shall now extend the subject into a series of parallels between the Roman-Catholic system, and the degeneracy of the Reformation; introduced by some remarks on the origin of the system in question, and on the controversy which it has occasioned in the Christian world *.

* Much of the present, and of several of the following chapters, appeared in the Christian Observer, from July to October, 1825, under the title of "The Philosophy of the Roman-Catholic Religion;" of which essay the work now published is properly an extension; especially in the author's attempt to explain the recoil of our accusations

The usual resources of debate appear to have been long since exhausted, in the disputes between the opponents and defenders of the ancient faith. What, at an earlier period of discussion, was advanced as original argument, has now degraded into wearisome and powerless repetition. Every person, conscious of the incurable diversity of human opinion on all points incapable of absolute demonstration, must be aware of the difficulties of a subject so extensive and diversified as that of the Reformation; and in relation to which, passion and interest have become the most active parties in the fray. And as the materials of the controversy have rapidly increased with time, they seem, at this late hour of the discussion, to defy compression. The combatants are now required to take the field, not barely to answer direct questions of divinity; but to deliver in their theses on metaphysics, physics, chronology, language, history, bibliography, and a variety of other subjects, diffused over the accumulations of literature and science.

All this is nothing else than the obscuration of a plain subject by clouds of dust; and if

against the Papal system on ourselves. If he has been unsuccessful in such an application, he regards his labour as lost. "Thou art the man."

we are to settle the question by what the world calls learning, what is to become of all but the few, the very few, who, in a superficial age, are possessed of real erudition? Of the religion of Jesus Christ, it was expressly said by himself, *The poor have the Gospel preached unto them;* and, as we shall see in the sequel, if the poor, as well as all ranks above them, have not also the Gospel *written* for them, the Bible must be a book limited in its circulation, according as men in power may find it useful to purposes of ambition and fraud.

In the mean time, it will be conceded, that the subjects of the British Crown have been, for upwards of two centuries, in possession of the canonical Scriptures, provided for their express use, in the shape of an authorized translation; executed by royal mandate; confirmed as a national right by successive acts of the legislature; and recognised by all our ecclesiastical formularies, as their basis and criterion. In this view, there is only one portal into the temple, to be entered alike by priests and people.

Now it is asked, whether the investigation at issue may not be confined within definite and manageable limits; accessible to men of plain understandings, and educated *without*

the pale of theological erudition? And may not this be accomplished by examining the matter in its elements?—The present writer aspires to attempt this. He by no means professes to have gone through a regular course of study on the points before him. It has already appeared, that his plan is formally opposed to such a procedure. He has no ambition, on a subject of this kind, to be classed among the learned. Very far from it, indeed! He would only endeavour to analyze the controversy on the principles of sound philosophy, under the guidance of the written revelation of God; illustrated by appeals to the general sense of mankind, and to the experience and observation of all such as observe, with discrimination, the passing events of the world.

It must further be distinctly understood, that, though he is a member and minister of the National Church, he does not approach the arena, on the present occasion, either under the banner of his own confession, or that of any other reformed communion whatever. He cannot, as a consistent Protestant, concede that even the purest assembly of Christians is to be regarded as the sole accredited interpreter of the general charter of the church. The debate must never be lowered from its lofty

scriptural position, into an effort to establish the superiority of any single branch of the Reformation, to the disparagement of the rest. Matters of eternal importance involve struggles not for rivalry, but for the salvation of souls.

The author would urge this, without in the least impeaching his own preference for our public Establishment. It would be offering a degrading compliment to the Church of England, as the eldest daughter of the Reformation, to press claims in her behalf far higher than she ever herself preferred. She is not answerable for the adulation of friends *, whose false

* In an archidiaconal charge delivered in May 1826, occurs the following illustration of what is above stated: 'She,' the Church of England, 'is ennobled by the towers of state, fortified by the bulwarks of law, and decorated by the palaces of charity. Built upon the Rock of Ages, and cemented by the blood of martyrdom, her walls are called salvation, and her gates praise. She is all-glorious within. In her tabernacle is seen the ark of the Testament; there are the hallowed trophies of liberty; there are the dedicated spoils of genius and learning, of philosophy and science; and the golden harp of poesy is hung upon the horns of her altar. She is indeed altogether lovely; the perfection of beauty, the joy of the whole earth.'

In April 1827 was published an address from a Roman-Catholic priest, which contains such paragraphs as these: 'She,' the Church of Rome, 'requires humility, subordination, self-denial, mortification, obedience to the moral and evangelical law of God, and to the laws of the country and authority of the civil magistrate. She teaches that the fabric, both of the active and passive virtues, must be erected on the ruins of pride, self-will, self-interest, and self-love. Her ministers are the property of God, the

zeal is more adverse to her prosperity, than the attacks of her confessed opponents. Enemies, in the guise of flatterers, have beset her in every period of her history. Some of these have exerted themselves to force her back, almost to the intolerance and despotism of the times of darkness. But let all such advocates

church, and the people. They are literally the servants of the servants of God. No other cares are allowed to distract their minds, no other interests to divide their hearts. We are at once the priests of the Most High God, the governors of his church, the teachers of the Gospel, and the fathers and friends of our people. Of the Catholic religion it may indeed be said, she is the daughter of Heaven, the parent of all our virtues, the guardian of all our pleasures; who alone gives peace and contentment, divests the heart of care and the life of trouble, bursts on the mind a flood of joy, and sheds perpetual and unmingled sunshine on the virtuous breast. No man that loves order, and conscience, and virtue, is ever weary of the Catholic religion.. Nay, more; scarcely one in ten thousand even of the vicious part of these straying foreigners ever repudiates his religion from his breast. They are unalterable in the midst of unfaithfulness. Catholicity, I love thee! "The joy of the whole earth is Mount Sion. Go round about her; count her towers; mark well her bulwarks; declare it to the generations to come, God is known in her palaces for a refuge."'—I only quote these singular specimens of eulogy, each of them drawn up as if to invite an enemy to examine the vulnerable parts of the two systems, as an illustration of the exquisite fatuity of propping up a favourite scheme with materials common to all parties. Scholars, deeply read in Priestley and Belsham, may perhaps find parallel passages in *them;* describing Unitarianism as 'all-glorious within; there are the hallowed trophies of liberty, the dedicated spoils of genius, learning, &c. &c. &c. Unitarianism, I love thee! the perfection of beauty, the joy of the whole earth.'—But we should all study Prov. xxvii. 2.

be assured, that the church will prosper or decay, not by reviving among us the principles of the hierarchy which we so justly deserted; but by our consistency or inconsistency with our original doctrine and discipline.

We do not oppose the Papal system of Christianity, in order to substitute the Confession of Augsburgh, or our own Articles, or any human formularies, however excellent, for the decrees of the Council of Trent. From the earliest dawn of the Reformation, it has been a current head of impeachment against the pontiff and his conclave, that *they* limit the faith by the boundaries of the Latin Church, and reduce religion to an idle question of geography.

Let, therefore, those who persevere in the accusation, beware of the extent of the charge; of its powers of recrimination; and of their own exposure to the stroke of their re-action. The friends of pure and undefiled Christianity must suspend their inter-ecclesiastical dissensions, while they agitate questions of more pressing interest. They must agree, in the interval, to fight in the same ranks; and, for the time, cease to quarrel on the subordinate distinctions of uniform, accoutrements, and discipline.

It should be ever recollected, that Cranmer, Ridley, Hooper, and Latimer, no farther died

for the Anglican Church, than Huss or Jerome suffered for the congregations of Bohemia. They were, severally, martyrs for the faith of Jesus Christ; as that faith existed then, and exists now, independently of its connexion with any human system.

No church, as such, is at all dependent upon its martyrology for the support of its legitimacy. To say nothing of various modifications of heathenism itself, which have had their willing victims to what they considered to be truth, Catholicity arrays its army of Elizabethan martyrs, to confront the rival line of the Marian witnesses; and, if an almost super-human fortitude, and endurance of anguish and agony, could establish its later pretensions, the *convulsionnaires* of Paris, so recently as the close of the last century, might be adduced as undeniable evidence of the truth they aspired to confirm. It has been observed, with perfect truth, that, after all the struggles of rival parties to support their respective schemes by testimony furnished at the stake, it is not the martyr which makes the saint, but the saint the martyr. "Though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing."

But the argument might prove too much.

For what shall we call, in this relation, the self-torture of the Hindoo devotees; the sacrifice of widows, so far as voluntary; and all such acts as inflict upon their victims, mutilation, protracted torture, and death? Whatever be the value of the induction derived from martyrdom, in the opinion of religionists of any denomition, I only advert to it now as a *specimen*, in passing, of convertible arguments; those, it is intended, which are open to all parties, and conclusive to none.

As an opponent of the Romanists, on this occasion, I must suppose myself a member of no existing church; and beg to be considered as a neutral observer, independent of educational and social prejudices, and coming, as it were, fresh and new to the discussion, with the Bible in my hand, and with an intellect capable of exercising itself, unaided by any servile submission to borrowed opinions.

What triumphs might not the Reformation have achieved, if its apologists had come to its succour, leaving behind them the distinctions of party; and, so far at least, proving to their enemies that they aimed at an object more sublime than the destruction of one church by the establishment of another on its ruins!—Jesus Christ declared, "My kingdom is not of this

world." If his Protestant disciples had uniformly acted in the spirit of such declaration, the Roman Catholics could not have defended themselves, as they have done, on the principle of retaliation. But this is one of their strong positions.

CHAPTER V.

THE ORIGIN AND OBJECT OF THE ROMAN CATHOLIC SYSTEM.

Learn to view Popery in a true light, as a conspiracy to exalt the power of the clergy, even by subjecting the most sacred truths of religion to contrivances for raising their authority; and by offering to the world another method of being saved, besides that prescribed by the Gospel. Popery is a mass of impostures; supported by men who manage them with great advantages, and impose them with inexpressible severities on those who dare call any thing in question, that they dictate to them. —BURNET.

LET us now come to the immediate inquiry, Whence originated Catholicity? In endeavouring to answer this question, I only solicit the reader's attention to the following short and obvious account of the reception of Christianity among mankind, on its first promulgation.—The religion of Jesus Christ speedily and irresistibly established itself, to whatever extent, among the inhabitants of the earth; and, as might have been foreseen, became the professed creed of a mixed body of believers and hypocrites.

The quick-sighted world was by no means slow in discovering the power of this early influence of the Gospel; and became convinced, at the same time, that it would increase, and obtain permanency, to the confusion of all its enemies. The new religion was, however, found to bear hard upon a worldly life; sustained by ceremonials either Jewish or heathen. They who led such a life, and depended upon such a religion—the aggregate, in fact, of mankind—tried to despise this novel doctrine of the Cross; and to escape all its practical consequences. But this could not be done. They felt themselves defeated: and were stung to the quick by the mortification of the overthrow. They hated the Gospel; but their hatred was less than their fear. They witnessed, with awe, the appearance on earth and the coming triumph of a new and mysterious power: "Herod was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him."

This was a crisis in the history and prospects of a wicked world; and what was to be done?

Mankind pondered awhile the question, and then replied: "We must pervert this new religion to our own purposes, or we are vanquished. We must, therefore, appear to submit to Christianity, while we are fighting against it, under its own banners, and led on by its own

officers; whom we will elect and commission. It forbids us, for example, to be covetous: and its Founder has said, *How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of heaven!* but, in despite of such maxims, we will contrive to heap up treasure, on pretence of supporting the necessary splendour of the Christian dynasty. It forbids us to be sensual; but we will yet indulge all our appetites, on the plea—and we have plenty of texts to support it—that the faith of the Nazarene is a liberal and benignant dispensation; providing also a full propitiation for *all* sin, and abolishing a now obsolete law, which was severe in its requisitions, and cruel in its penalties. It disallows pride, selfishness, and ambition; but we are determined still to exalt ourselves, and to be vain and ambitious, under the plausible names of dignity and emulation. This novel hypothesis would also equalize the spiritual rights of mankind; but no such consequence as this *can* be allowed. We can, indeed, easily crush this equality, by an apparent anxiety for the good of the people and the *profanum vulgus*, who shall continue to keep their distance from the penetralia of the temple. And why not? There was the holy of holies within the vail of the metropolitan church at Jerusalem,—a precedent

quite sufficient to silence all remonstrances. We must never allow the people to know too much; lest, where there is no mystery, there should be no blind reliance on the priesthood. The Gospel, therefore, shall have its esoteric and its exoteric divisions; like the religions which, in defiance of all resistance, it will at length supplant. Thus shall this intrusive system gradually lose its original character; and, whatever may be its effects on the few enthusiasts who may really believe and obey it, it shall eventually become the engine of its own destruction*."

* 'Satan showed Jesus all the *kingdoms of the world*, and the glory of them, and said, "*All these things are mine*, and unto whomsoever I will I give them: *all these things therefore will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me*." To which Jesus replied, "Get thee behind me, Satan! for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve." By the Romish Church this offer has clearly been *accepted*. "Connive at and sanction all the successively arising superstitions, and all the vices of men, which are the adoration I require; and in return I will make them give you temporal honour, and wealth, and dominion: you shall be seated on the throne of the seven hills, and shall mount the many-headed beast, on condition that you administer to all nations the cup of filthiness of fornication (that is, of departure from the true worship), which is, in fact, the worship of me!"' ('Letters on the Church. By an Episcopalian.' 1826. 96, 97.) The author here cited, to support the allegations in the text, applies the above to the alliance between church and state; which he considers to have been originally grounded on a compromise between the powers of darkness and the children of this world. I cannot sympathize with this

This is, indisputably, the real *origin* of the Roman-Catholic superstition; the re-appearance of idolatry under the forms of Christianity: or, as was exactly the case in the previous instance of the Theocracy, it was a revelation from God perverted to the service of sin. As the matured result of this vile conspiracy, the Son of the Blessed has been made the tyrant and the deceiver of the nations.

But while we are consenting to the fidelity of this statement, let us remember, to our own confusion, that we are parties to this very confederacy, as far as we secularize the Gospel of Christ Jesus; as far as we are ashamed of religion, and are afraid of its interference with

acute speculator's wish to separate our own hierarchy from the civil government; by erecting it into an independent corporation, continuing to possess an immense revenue, a vast portion of which is attached to sinecures, connected with pluralities, and open to the influence of Nepotism. The experiment would be perilous in the extreme. It would annihilate the benefits now derived from the supervision of the laity; and by which the balance of power is, to a certain degree, preserved. The history of the Convocation, and particularly of its turbulent and rebellious conduct against the Episcopacy, which, with other causes, occasioned its virtual abolition, might surely teach us the impolicy of releasing ecclesiastics, as such, from civil authority. The Episcopalian in question should be the last man to increase the secular powers of any church whatever; since, by the door he would now open, entered in much of the despotism and of the associated wickedness of the Papacy.

our favourite schemes and amusements. In this nineteenth century, of what is so complacently termed *the Christian æra*—as if our very chronology were an evidence of our sincerity—it continues to be the world's tacit agreement, to exclude the spiritual influence of the Gospel from the arrangements of society, and from the regulations of empire.

If this be a hard saying, we would ask the objector to assign the date when Christianity, so early pressed into the service of its enemies, actually began to govern mankind. Not but what many human laws are consistent with the doctrine of Christ, and have indeed been unconsciously derived from our great Lawgiver; and the reason is obvious: anti-christianity itself acknowledges the wisdom of his moral code, and its tendency to civilize mankind.

But if we possess a body of just laws, and even own ourselves to be indebted, in this view, to Him by whom kings reign and princes decree justice—*Himself the Prince of the kings of the earth*—we may, at the same time, quite refuse submission to his authority in concerns properly personal. He may, to a certain extent, govern us publicly; but in the family he is an unwelcome guest; our private life is not allowed to be within the Legislator's jurisdic-

tion. So that, practically, there may be no kind of difference between the earliest perverters of Christianity, and its present nominal adherents.—It may be well, as we proceed, to make such an application of the subject, however abruptly introduced, or lowering to our high pretensions. Happy they, who will severally apply the analogy to themselves; and ask, in the spirit of genuine humility, "Lord, is it I?"

In matters of religion, as frequently occurs also in those of merely temporal importance, the imputation of guilt will never be resented by the innocent. If, in attacking the Papal fortress, a flight of rockets should occasionally be discharged against some contiguous defences, mistaken by the artillery for a part of the enemy's lines—constructed apparently by the same hand, and auxiliary to the main fortification—the *friendly* engineer must not complain. He is ostensibly on the side of the foe. There is no wide interval, no extent of debateable ground, between the combatants; and the confusion of the attack is inevitable.

But I will return to the fact conceded by all parties, that Christianity has been abused to selfish and interested purposes. Our dissensions will be, when we inquire by *whom* it has been

most perverted; and whether the Church of Rome has been more criminal—weighing the relative advantages of all communions—than the churches of the Reformation, in renouncing allegiance to our common Potentate.

With regard, then, to the perversion in question, and especially as effected by the Roman Catholic Antichrist, it would appear that any person of a discursive mind, with the Scripture in his hand, and with the comments supplied by a competent knowledge of mankind, painfully confirmed by self-acquaintance, would anticipate the result described. He would argue, that such would be the certain consequences of a pure and holy religion being proposed to the acceptance of mankind; and when such a system was delivered into their external possession. The career thus pursued by the world was precisely according to the constitution and course of human nature, as vitiated by sin.

The calculation receives force from our remembrance, that the Christian church itself, even in all the freshness and comparative innocence of its infancy, was polluted by its own members; and, in not a few cases, by some among them who, although in reality sound in heart, did yet become the grief and shame of their society,

by aberrations in judgment, obstinacy in minor points of importance, indulgence in favouritism, and in attachment to an obsolete dispensation. The proverbial purity of the primitive church —as we have seen in a former chapter—is not borne out by the inspired writings; which record the imperfections and stains of the communities established, for example, at Corinth, and in Galatia, and at many other stations of the Apostolic mission. And what shall we say of the lamentable state of the seven Asiatic churches, affording examples of Christian societies spiritually dying, or on the verge of death; notwithstanding only sixty-three years had elapsed since the Saviour had been crucified, and risen, and ascended?

But that same Saviour himself had warned his earliest disciples of the approaching corruptions in his church:—"There shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that (if it were possible) they shall deceive the very elect. *Behold, I have told you before.*" Nor less observable were the subsequent predictions of St. Paul and St. Peter:—"For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your ownselves shall men arise, speak-

ing perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." "There shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with feigned word make merchandize of you. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption. For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning."

While desperate wickedness was thus intruding itself into the very fold of Christ, and confounding the wolves with the sheep, we may ask, What was the world doing *without* this sacred enclosure—I mean, the world which abstained, at that period, from any general union with Christianity, in its then purest form? Why, it was doing what it is doing at this moment,—exulting over the crimes and divisions of the church; and gathering thence many a lesson on the art of leading on its own designs,

beneath the shadow of the Cross. It was maturing its plans; watching the movements in the enemy's camp; and learning how to accomplish a plausible compromise between God and the world. The conspiracies of the first century were thus the radical principle of the highest triumph achieved by any subsequent form of Antichrist.

Electrified and confounded therefore, as a Christian philosopher at the present day might at first be, could he be transported instantaneously from the seclusion of his closet to the Basilica of St. Peter's, during the pageantries of a festival; yet how rapidly would his astonishment subside into the calms of contemplation, when he could recal to his mind the simple circumstance, that, for eighteen centuries, mankind had been employed in elaborating the stupendous spectacle before his eyes, with all its adjuncts, out of the Gospel of Jesus Christ! Their success is indeed great and overwhelming; but not greater than the urgency of the case prompted. It is the natural, inevitable result of the world's endeavour to darken the effulgence of truth, and to divert its rays in such a manner as might seem to light up man's own inventions.

Christians, whose minds, as instructed from

above, look before and after, would wonder if things were otherwise. They are not strangers to the maxim, that in proportion to the excellence of any thing is its capacity of abuse. In the same proportion is it found necessary to impose upon human ignorance by dazzle and glare; that is, by such an exterior as overpowers men too much to allow of their investigating what it conceals.

The above remarks surely reduce the question, Whence originated Catholicity? within definite and narrow limits. It exhibits a creative, restless principle, always in action, and quite sufficient to explain every mystery of paganized Christianity. Where, then, exists the necessity of dilating the subject according to the immeasurable scale usually adopted? Fathers, councils, schoolmen, cardinals, are not only without authority; but their interference is positively superfluous. We can anticipate all they can advance; since whatever they allege is comprized, in its elements, in our present theory.

Neither does it more efficiently determine the debate, when Protestant disputants, on the other hand, bring forward counter-statements from the same fathers and councils; and turn the

ordnance of these artillerists upon themselves. On the principle we assume, it can be of no avail, when they allege, for instance, that Paschase Radbert invented the Real Presence; Ignatius Loyola, the order of Jesuits; Dominic, the Inquisition; and Benedict, a certain order of Monachism. We are concerned, immediately, with the doctrines and observances which we *find;* and not with the dates of their appearance. It matters not, in this view, what sides Radbert and Berengarius took in the controversy of the Eucharist. The invention itself, like every super-addition to Papal despotism, was only a step found to be necessary in the progress of a system intended to enslave mankind.

To illustrate this part of the argument, I would ask, whether, in the ferment excited among us by the question of the abolition of Slavery, we are anxious to ascertain, at the present hour, what individuals have rendered their names illustrious, in colonial history, by the discovery of the cart-whip, the iron collar, and the brand?

No: our undivided aim is the ultimate annihilation of sanguinary oppression. The system may have its own accurate and undisputed

chronology of cruelty and avarice; but this part of the investigation is remote, and practically useless. The mere annalist of guilt and misery may, indeed, busy himself with the arrangements of dates and events occurring in West-India history; as they who compile the memoirs of the age of Louis the Sixteenth may find it expedient to detail the invention of the guillotine, and the organization of the Revolutionary Tribunal. But if your friend be assassinated, do you ask, except perhaps for the purpose of fastening upon the murderer his guilt, when and where he purchased his dagger?

CHAPTER VI.

ASSUMED INFALLIBILITY OF THE ROMAN CATHOLIC HIERARCHY.

Imperial Rome governed the bodies of men, but did not extend her empire further. Papal Rome improved upon imperial: she made the tiara stronger than the diadem; pontiffs more powerful than prætors; and the crozier more victorious than the sword. She devised a system, so complete in all its parts, for the subjugation both of body and of mind, that, like Archimedes, she asked but *one* thing, and that Luther denied her—a fulcrum of ignorance on which to rest that lever by which she could have balanced the world.—COLTON.

WE will now dare to approach a point in the discussion, where the spirit of Antichrist has displayed all its malignity, throughout every division of the Christian world, but chiefly in mystic Babylon—I mean, the question of Ecclesiastical Polity.

So extraordinary is the irritation produced, in certain circles, even by the mildest allusion to this subject as matter of controversy, that a by-stander might imagine, that the entire of the Gospel were comprised in the arrange-

ments of outward discipline; and that it signified not in the least what was our personal character, provided we were governed by the regular successors of the Apostles. This preference of the shell for the kernel is the natural religion of mankind, under every degree of the light of Revelation.

For such a perversion of truth there is, however, no difficulty in accounting. We may possess and defend our favourite forms of church government, and pronounce sentence upon such as dissent from us; but without the sacrifice of a single vice, or the attainment of one solitary virtue. I have made a similar remark in reference to those apologists for the Gospel who set at defiance its rules of conduct. In either case, men of no principle find it to be their interest to attend the great masquerade of life in the dress of Christianity. And it is only a dress: their hearts are all on the infidel side.

But these men are wise in their generation. They have accurately calculated upon the universal wish of their fellows to enjoy the securities of religion and the pleasures of the world at the same time; and among such as attempt to make this coalition, no casuists are so popular as they who persuade bad men to be satisfied with the forms of godliness, while they deny its

power. Is not this the secret which explains the irritation above mentioned?

The upholder of Papal authority, the exclusive Episcopalian or Congregationalist of the Protestant church—either of these three parties, in proportion as he looks for safety to his being within the pale of his own communion, will always be angry with the man who ventures to question his assumptions. And why, but because, if he be driven from his present refuge, he has none other in reserve! The purest ecclesiastical community is, at least, strongly exposed to the temptation of admitting members with very unsatisfactory evidences of sincerity; and, afterwards, of retaining them, when they have begun to commit overt acts of a suspicious aspect. If this temptation to confound good and evil seduce a small society into inconsistencies, what can we expect in national churches; numbering, as these necessarily do, millions of adherents, composed of all classes, and congregated under circumstances where it is all but impossible to separate, or even to try to separate, the wheat from the chaff?

On this very account, the utmost anxiety should be shewn, by ministers of religion, to press upon their people the absolute uselessness of all externals, so long as they are strangers to

the spirit and power of Jesus Christ. More, far more than this, ought to be urged upon the conscience,—as by the assurance, that our outward connexion with any branch of the church of Christ will only increase our condemnation and misery at last; if we are members of Christ in name, and practically his enemies.

But who is sufficient for these things? What master of eloquence is able to convince men of their guilt and desperation, in wilfully mistaking the shadows of religion for realities? We say *wilfully*, since no individual in this empire can deny, that from time to time salvation has been offered to him, with a solemnity which for the moment began to shake his false confidence, and might possibly have drawn from him the silent confession, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian!" How has this impression been effaced, but, among other causes of relapse, by the wretched persuasion of his being in communion with some church; which, as he fondly dreams, is responsible for the security of its members, and, by some undefined process, saves him the trouble of further exertion.

It may farther be observed, that exclusiveness in the concerns of the visible church partakes of the spirit of compulsion. Now, the

religion of Jesus Christ is a system, not of violence, but persuasion. "Compel them to come in." Yes—by the gentle constraints of compassion for their wants and miseries. Christ offered his salvation to all, but forced it upon none. But, alas! it is not *salvation* which the exclusionary would urge his fellow-sinners to embrace. It is the very thing left out of his calculations. Antichrist is satisfied with shew and ceremony. He delights in the splendour of Episcopacy, *but execrates the prelate who faithfully fulfils its duties.* He will load with preferment the man who defends an establishment; but bitterly repent of his liberality, if the defender should enforce its doctrines, and *also* realize them in daily life.

Antichrist will allow, rather encourage, an ecclesiastic to defend the Athanasian Creed, especially its damnatory clauses, and to deliver elaborate declamations on the Trinity; provided the apologist be indifferent to the influences of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, regardless of the love of God, and be not a partaker of the communion of the Holy Ghost. This is the true reason why the doctrine of the Athanasian Creed is such a favourite with the mere speculator in theology. Ostensibly it calls for no sacrifice, interferes with no scheme of ambition,

avarice, or self-indulgence; and is, consequently, exactly adapted to supply matter for discussion to any one who forbids the Gospel to meddle with his sins. The doctrine of the Trinity is cordially believed *only* by those persons who, discovering themselves to be by nature and practice the children of wrath and enemies to God, are anxious to escape everlasting misery, and therefore seek to be reconciled to the Father, through the death of the Son, by the influences of the Holy Ghost; and, as a proof of their spirituality, and practical faith in this mystery of godliness, walk in newness of life: the connexion between such faith and holiness being indissoluble.

Yet few things induce so much self-complacency in the mind of a theorist in religion, as the persuasion of his Athanasian orthodoxy. It is also one of the many points where the lower classes of nominal Christians closely tread in the steps of their superiors. A pious clergyman has by no means to struggle, in his parish, with objectors to metaphysical niceties and damnatory clauses: *these* are not the stumbling-blocks in the way to eternal life; for none, at least of his plebeian opponents, are disturbed by modes of faith. But when he begins to shake their confidence in their own assumed security; and warns the formalist, scoffer,

blasphemer, sensualist, Sabbath-breaker, libertine, the lover of money and slave of the world, and the profane person, to *flee from the wrath to come;* then he may expect the revival of questions once put by philosophical Epicureans and Stoics: "What will this babbler say? May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is?" And the inquiries will be made for the same reason,—BECAUSE HE PREACHES UNTO THEM JESUS AND THE RESURRECTION! These subjects, as he treats them, form the basis of appeals to the conscience; and not of a cold and barren discussion, which creates no alarm, and awakens no hope.

In the mean time, Antichrist is conscious that the union of a strong attachment to a church, with a practical contempt for its injunctions, is the foundation of his kingdom. Towards the superstructure a high Churchman and a high Dissenter—who are essentially the same characters—contribute largely both labour and materials. Had these builders been born in Italy or Spain, they would have been monks of the first water, and might successfully have canvassed for the places of Familiars of the Inquisition on every vacancy; since ecclesiastical tyranny is everywhere the same, and only restrained in its exercise by local authority.

But as we have arrived, in this parallelism, at the gates of the *eternal city*, of the metropolis of the Christian world, as its inhabitants fondly call it, I will venture upon the attempt—not the first of its kind—to account for the claim of INFALLIBILITY advanced by the most sectarian establishment in all Christendom. Let the reader, who is startled by the epithet, remember that sectarianism is the characteristic of all exclusive systems, and becomes more mischievous and malignant as the field of its operations is extended. Some among ourselves may wish to confine it within the walls of a conventicle; but it ranges at will through the Basilica of St. Peter's, and the portals of most of the religious edifices of the Reformation fly open on its approach.

It is utterly immaterial to our purpose to ascertain whether the attribute of infallibility—under whatever name the policy of the Vatican may veil its practical meaning—be vested exclusively in the sovereign pontiff, or in general councils, or in the concurrence of both these portions of the Papal legislature: it is sufficient that the thing is inherent in that metaphysical entity which, under the name of *the church*, has hitherto eluded the grasp of definition. The reader will feel grateful to the

author for enlivening this dreary and wearisome subject, by the triple explanation of an undefinable phrase, as furnished by a living satirist:

'What is a church?'—Let truth and reason speak,
They would reply, 'The faithful, pure, and meek;
From Christian folds the one selected race,
Of all professions, and in every place.'
'What is a church?'—'A flock,' our vicar cries,
'Whom bishops govern, and whom priests advise;
Wherein are various states, and due degrees,
The bench for honour, and the stall for ease:
That ease be mine, which, after all his cares,
The pious, peaceful prebendary shares.'
'What is a church?'—Our honest sexton tells,
''Tis a tall building, with a tower and bells;
Where priest and clerk, with joint exertion, strive
To keep the ardour of their flock alive;
That, by his periods eloquent and grave,
This, by responses, and a well-set stave:
These for the living; but when life be fled,
I toll myself the requiem for the dead*.'

But—to retire from this short excursion towards the green retreats of fairy land back to the sultry and sandy deserts of matters ecclesiastical—we may observe, that the power of infallibility, as claimed by the Latin church, resembles an unwritten law, delivered from human lips, like the responses of an oracle, with an air of mysterious and irresponsible

* Crabbe's Borough, Letter ii.

authority; incapable of being privately examined, but possessing far more than the force of a statute actually recorded, and open to public inspection: or, it is analogous to a corporation, composed of innumerable and separated individuals, all of them asserting the supremacy of the general body, but no one able to define in what or in whom the power resides, or whence such power is derived.

Neither does any individual, though forming a part of the aggregate, hold himself to be answerable for what has been done, or will be done, by—he cannot tell whom or what, except that it is *the church*. In an age less enlightened than our own, Lord Coke said, that 'corporations have no souls.' Whether he meant, that the proceedings of these bodies subject none of their members to individual responsibility, or that they frequently act, in their collective capacity, as though they feared no reckoning in a future state, may be known to the jurists. In either case, the ecclesiastics, not only of Rome, but of churches dissenting from Rome, might be aware of parallelisms in their own practice.

As to this infallibility itself, few mysteries are more palpably open to the penetration of common sense than this secret of the Papal

cabinet. It evidently originated in the necessity felt by its hierarchy of establishing a high, commanding, absolute authority, forbidding all scrutiny, and essential as the grand moving power of its whole machinery.

To effect this, it sagaciously calculated upon the incredible credulity of mankind, and the disposition of common minds to be mystified and silenced by a look and tone of decision. It knew well, that, with few exceptions —too few to spoil its projects—men are passive machines, obeying an exterior impulse, like the pistons and wheels of a steam-engine on the application of fire. The only caution necessary to be observed in working human mechanism, is, that you must beware, in the operation, of obstructing the immediate gratification of men's passions; or, if this must be done to a certain degree, you must allow them afterwards some compensatory indulgence, such as may not disturb your present process. In the interval, let not the engineer overload the safety-valve.

The doctrine of ecclesiastical compensations shall be illustrated in its proper place. Let it now be observed, that the Court of Rome has always uttered its decrees with the tact of a dictator completely satisfied with his own de-

cisions, and with a manner triumphantly anticipating submission. It does not offer a doctrine referable, for proof, to a higher criterion, but to be received implicitly, instantaneously, finally. All this, in its exterior, is magnificent; but in essence, it is nothing but the vulgarity of what the world calls *quackery*, invested with the pretensions and splendour of the Vatican; as a coward might wear the costume, and brandish the sabre, of a hero.

Infallibility, or an assumption of power bordering upon such a name, is quite necessary to the existence of the entire system. It is the main-spring of a despotism affecting to derive its sovereignty from Heaven. In this instance, as in all others of papal usurpation, it is perfectly needless to consult the chronological tables of Christendom, in order to discover whether the occupier of St. Peter's chair reached his extravagance of power under the pontificate of an Innocent or a Boniface. Whoever, whatever, first scaled this summit, the enterprize and success gained a natural and necessary point in the progress of spiritual tyranny; advancing, with the lapse of time, in regular progression, and so attaining its present eminence.

Whoever has seen, in St. Peter's itself, or even in the magic illusions of a diorama, the

inscription circling round the lower part of the dome of the Basilica—TU ES PETRUS, ET SUPER HANC PETRAM ÆDIFICABO ECCLESIAM MEAM, &c. &c.—in their splendid and gigantic proportions, may have felt how irresistible such a motto, so appropriated, and so *interpreted* by the surrounding majesty of the edifice, must be to those whose faith—so it is called—is derived to them, and strengthened, by the external sense; and with whom the gorgeous vision has all the force of argumentation.

By such logic, indeed, was Kotzebue converted to the system of Antichrist. The wonder is, that he was not previously converted to the faith of the solar fire; when he was studying the theology of Peru, and witnessing the splendours of Peruvian worship exhibited on the stage during the performance of his own Pizarro. When this drama was first naturalized in our own country, and represented at Drury Lane, nothing, as I have been told by those who remember it, could be more imposing than the pageantry of the scene; when the Virgins of the Sun, robed in snow-white vestures, chaunted the Peruvian *Gloria in excelsis,* and appeared to be conscious of the present deity. The feelings of the audience were, if possible, as devotional as those inspired

by the *miseres* of the Sistine Chapel on Good Friday, or by the sight of the illuminated cross at St. Peter's.—We must, however, trifle no farther with subjects which should make us all serious.

We smile at these things, and congratulate ourselves on possessing an intellect capable of pouring contempt on the fooleries of the Church of Rome; while we are guilty of forgetting, that under the surface of those very fooleries are the depths of satanic delusion, the great gulph fixed between the kingdoms of light and darkness. Over this deep broods the spirit of Antichrist; and woe be to the souls whom he there detains to the Judgment of the Great Day!

CHAPTER VII.

APPLICATION OF THE SUBJECT TO THE PROTESTANT CHURCH.

I see a spirit rising among us, too like that of the Church of Rome, of advancing the Clergy beyond their due authority, to an unjust pitch. This rather heightens jealousies and prejudices against us, than advances our real authority; and it will fortify the designs of profane infidels, who desire nothing more than to see the public ministry of the church first disgraced, and then abolished.—BURNET.

ALTHOUGH no branch of the Reformation has formally claimed the attribute of infallibility, yet who can have read the history of our own hierarchy, as told—not by Baxter, Neale, and Calamy—but by certain of its most devoted adherents—Collier and Heylin, for example—without a conviction, that, long before this time of day, the Church of England would have been reconciled to the see of Rome, but for the struggles of such among its enlightened lay and clerical members as, in various periods,

were coeval with the High Commission Court and Star Chamber; and with the Convocations and Sacheverelism of the last of the Stuarts? "All sects and communities of religion," says Mr. Southey, "settle and purify after their first effervescence; then they become vapid *." The example of our own Church is by no means an exception to this remark.

Not very long after the succession of Elizabeth to the throne of England, it was evident that the spirit of the Reformation had evaporated. But with the tasteless fluid which remained, was speedily mingled the bitter infusion of anti-christianity. The principles of the Papacy were revived in the most important division of the Protestant church. Of the personal religion of Elizabeth, the evidence is, at best, negative; and this may explain her resistance to the farther progress of the Reformation; her jealousy of such godly prelates as Grindal; and, in short, the general course of her ecclesiastical policy.

In the succeeding reign, things did not improve; and of the new monarch it was said—and not of him only—that he was always talking and writing against Popery, but always

* Quarterly Review, No. I. 194.

acting for it. History records his colloquial profaneness of speech, and his attempt to violate, by authority, the sanctity of the Christian Sabbath. It is difficult to distinguish the religion of Elizabeth and James from the superstition of Queen Mary. All the three indulged one darling passion of an irreligious mind,—the intolerance of opinions different from their own; all the three refuted heresy by vituperation, or fire.

As far as the two Charleses and the second James were able to mould the National Church to their own uses, they made it, in effect, a province of the Papal empire. From the death, indeed, of Edward the Sixth, to the abdication of James the Second, the English Reformation generally seemed to retrograde. There was a perpetual effort to abridge religious liberty, and to degrade the revelation of Jesus Christ into a piece of political machinery. With this was combined, as the necessary confederate in all similar conspiracies, an endeavour to defraud the Gospel of its spiritual character and influence.

If my remarks should come under the observation of any Dissenter from our present Establishment, it may be well for him to allay the rising emotions of exultation over these confes-

sions of an ecclesiastic, by recollecting, that whatever dark stories may be told of a national hierarchy, they are capable of being paralleled in the annals of any, the most obscure, sect which has yet appeared within the precincts of the universal church. Antichrist is very able to intrude his worldliness, and his infallibility, wherever man lays his hand upon the ark of our common salvation.

A Dissenter who is nothing better than a Dissenter, and who preaches the Gospel of strife and contention; a student of such works only as owe their importance to authors on his own side; allowing himself to be irritated and vexed at the success, reputation, and influence of a pious clergyman; a builder of meetings opposite to parish churches, as if in defiance; a supporter of such missions and societies only as emanate from his own party;—such a Dissenter as this is nearly as sectarian and exclusive as the wearer of the triple crown. As Gray talks of "some village Cromwell," we may remind ourselves of some village Bonner, who might *not* be guiltless of his country's blood, had he full opportunity for the gratification of the universal passion of intolerance.

But however this may be, men actually in power; and where that power, according to the

perversion of scriptural language, is *spiritual;* will always be strongly tempted to think their own church the only one deserving the name, and perhaps the only one possessing the securities of eternal life*. If this be not the claim of infallibility, where are we to find it? Now, will any one, who casts his eyes on the passing ecclesiastical world—not as an idle looker-on, reckless of the welfare of mankind, but seriously anxious for their salvation—be blind to the fact, that we have a powerful and influential party in the bosom of our own communion, who seem to be bent upon its disgrace and final ruin, by their extravagant assumption of its perfection, and by an all but avowed consignment to perdition of every other sect!

* 'The authority of the church in matters of faith is a point in which it is impossible to draw the line accurately. It is evident that the decision of the church does not *make* any thing right or wrong: she can only *declare*, from the Scripture, what are the Christian doctrines and duties, and declare this by a fallible judgment.' (Letters on the Church, &c. 66.)—When men talk of prescribing what others are to believe, and really think that, in this manner, mind can govern mind, it seems to be quite as absurd as if the College of Physicians were to prescribe—not medicines, which may either succeed or fail, but—the actual degree of health with which it may be expedient for the community to be indulged; and for the possession of which every man should be required to exhibit a periodical certificate.—Subscription to articles is another point: but it is too possible for some persons to subscribe a confession without believing it; while others may fully believe, without subscribing it.

Should this position be termed rash and libellous, my defence is, that the purest church on earth must needs be administered by the sons of earth, "by nature the children of wrath, even as others;" and, therefore, that the libel, if such, is directed against man in his lost and fallen condition. We can only build with such wretched materials as are to be found in a lapsed world. "We have this treasure," says St. Paul, "in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." But we reverse the Apostle's design; and assume the vessel to be the treasure, and the power to be of man.

Of all religious societies, the Church of England is most constrained to suspect and scrutinize its ministers. No human writings contain a darker picture of human guilt, depravity, and misery, than is painted in our authorized formularies. We are therefore called upon, by mere consistency with our own doctrines, to judge ourselves with righteous judgment; to refer to the record, and to ask, from time to time, how far we and our confessions agree.

At this point let us again recur to the fact, that the Gospel is not in the least more acceptable to us because it has been embodied in

Articles and Homilies. On the contrary, examples are sufficiently notorious, where the essentials of Christianity are rejected with greater irritability and scorn, when ecclesiastics have detected their intrusion into instruments signed by themselves. A minister of religion, whether ordained in Italy, England, or Switzerland, is no more necessarily a believer in Jesus Christ, than was Simon Magus, in the day when he was admitted within the visible church by the symbol of regeneration.

Infallibility, by whatever name we disguise it, is the last attribute which even an acknowledged successor of the Apostles should aspire to possess. Judas was an apostle; but his assessors in his apostolical college were, of all men, the least arrogant. As to *their* infallibility, they spake as by inspiration—"filled with the Holy Ghost"—and it was that very inspiration which taught them to temper their authority with the spirit of humility. They did not extort obedience to their decisions, as if it were to advance their own personal concern and interest; but as ministers acting simply for God, and well satisfied if by any means they could *save* some; and not stand at the head of parties.

Observe with what expressions of self-con-

demnation the earliest fathers of the church described their original condition; and how they levelled themselves to an equality with their people. "Among whom," namely, such as "walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience," "we also all had our conversation in times past; in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath even as others." "We ourselves were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another"—"But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ." So that they affected no kind of spiritual superiority over the meanest of their converts, but united both the shepherd and the flock in one act of confession before God; and also declared, that by the same exercise of Divine compassion both were raised from the ruins of the Fall, and to exactly the same privileges.

But Antichrist, whether Papal or Protestant, has thrown this pure discipline of the Gospel

into the wildest disorder. His ministers address their flocks, not as fellow-criminals, but as if they were far less polluted by original sin than the subjects of their instruction; and as though almost every remaining stain had been washed away by the ceremony of ordination. They magnify not their office, but their own personal importance. Whereas it is essential to a consistent and successful ministration, that teachers should fully sympathize with their disciples, as themselves partakers of the guilt and misery common to all mankind. Without this, the administration of the word and sacraments will be all but nugatory—or rather the ministration of death; for how can *they* save the souls of others, who are strangers to their own depravity; and, of course, ignorant of the *great salvation!*

Again: the modern minister of the Gospel appears too often to forget, that the great object of his mission is quite distinct from the accidental circumstances attendant on his connection with a specific church; since, whatever those may be, he is under a primary and independent obligation to preach a doctrine which existed before the formation, and will survive the destruction, of any church whatever. If this be not remembered, he will sink into the

abject character of a sectarian; content himself with swelling the list of his partisans; and value the pulpit of the cathedral, or conventicle, as a candidate at a contested election values the mob and the hustings.

In this relation, every selfish, however popular, preacher is a favourite with Antichrist. It is the aim of that unblessed spirit, to draw men's attention from the essentials of the faith once delivered to the saints, to a zeal for what is not faith, and which belongs only to the kingdom of darkness. Jesus Christ commissions his servants to execute the nobler work of saving the souls of men. "I send thee," said the Head of the church, "to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me." Such was the commission given to one of his primitive disciples; and it remains in full force to the present hour.—But is it possible, that the successors of St. Paul can doubt that, after immediate inspiration has for nearly eighteen centuries been withheld from the universal church, we, who minister in these last times, are as fallible as the laity whom we instruct?

Alas! it is too possible—it is probable—it is certain, that some among us are buried in such depths of ignorance, as never to question, whether they do indeed preach to a sinful and dying world, what the same Apostle emphatically calls *the unsearchable riches of Christ.* If this phrase were not found in our authorized translation of the Scriptures, but in some contemporary writer—accused by an infidel world of enthusiasm—one might readily imagine the contempt it would occasion. But let this pass! Our whole inquiry may awaken a similar feeling. All men, and, beyond the rest, false teachers of any denomination, will despise—or hide their fear and stifle their convictions by affecting to despise—whatever tends to self-examination. It is the faithful instructor who is willing to discover his imperfections*; who

* 'When a minister, deeply impressed with the important difficulty of his work, looks into *his own heart*, to explore the resources with which he is furnished for so difficult a service; there, alas! he meets with little that does not serve to increase his sense of weakness, and to confirm his fears. For it must be remembered, that he is a man of like passions with his flock, inheriting a body of corruption; that he is, perhaps, deficient in ability, perhaps unfortunate in the natural constitution of his mind; that, at all events, he has to struggle with infirmities, is exposed to temptations, has more to accomplish than others, as well as greater difficulties to surmount; and that, whilst more will be expected from him, in himself he may have no resources above those of any of his congregation.'—*Sermons, by the Rev. John Venn.* i. 9.

anticipates the admonitions of another, and exclaims, "Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful." He is the man also who will warn his own flock not to take from his lips their religion upon trust; but to search the Scriptures daily, whether those things are so. He regards himself quite as much a learner as the congregation; dependent upon the same Giver and means of grace; and, if saved at last, entering the same gate of heaven, as the most insignificant of those around him.

Besides this, a really learned minister of God's word is aware of the variations of his own mind; as increase of scriptural knowledge and of self-acquaintance, and a more familiar observation of mankind, correct and enlarge his opinions. The learning of the ignorant is, as it were, printed in stereotype—the last edition of their minds is exactly the same with the foregoing one.

If the author's language on such a subject be resented as offensive, he may find shelter under authorities which the world has long received, without murmuring at their dictates. Paley, for example, insists upon the absurdity of looking for any thing like the general diffusion of theological erudition over a national

[illegible]

[illegible] Paley has touched only [illegible] that half the least [illegible] of the personal religion [illegible] order. Now, if erudition [illegible] in this body, sincerity [illegible] Theological learning, like any other [illegible] part of study, is little more than a [illegible] chained effect of the memory, and may be obtained by an infidel or German Neologian, as well as by a believer; so that a professor of divinity is often as unable to give religious instruction as the sceptic.—Mr. Cecil well illus-

* Moral and Political Philosophy. Book vi, chap. 10.

this fact in the following instance:—
oung is, of all other men, one of the most
g examples of the disunion of piety from
If we read his most true, impassioned,
mpressive estimate of the world, and of
n, we shall think it impossible that he
uninfluenced by his subject. It is, how-
a melancholy fact, that he was hunting
preferment at eighty years old, and felt
spoke like a disappointed man. The truth
pictured on his mind in most vivid colours;
elt it while he was writing. He felt himself
a retired spot; and he saw Death, the
ghty hunter, pursuing the unthinking world.
saw Redemption—its necessity and its
andeur; and, while he looked on it, he spoke
a man would speak whose mind and heart
re deeply engaged. Notwithstanding all this,
he view did not reach his heart. Had I
reached in his pulpit with the fervour and interest that his Night Thoughts discover, he would have been terrified. He told a friend of mine, who went to him under religious fears, that he must *go more into the world!*'—What a humiliating statement is this! But it is confirmed by his biographers. They seem to be exceedingly anxious to rescue him from all imputation of enthusiasm, by informing us,

that he instituted at Welwyn a bowling-green and assembly, occasionally attending both establishments himself.—Was Milton influenced by the divinity taught in the Paradise Lost?—It is well if, among many divines, we find a few practical disciples of Jesus Christ.

To what a state of destitution, then, do we reduce the church, by pursuing the hypothesis of the great master of morals, who has immediately led this pursuit; and who was too accurately acquainted with his species, not to be aware of the fact that it is far more easy to deliver divinity lectures, than to repent and believe the Gospel! No theological erudition, as such, can answer the question, *What must I do to be saved?* He who furnishes the reply must have something better,—the possession of the same religion, which he can then only satisfactorily explain to others: otherwise, he will either be struck dumb by the inquiry; or be a blind leader of the blind, confident in his own wisdom, and, in that wisdom, liable to perish everlastingly.

In all this confusion of the visible church we may expect, among other consequences, the misrule and despotism of Antichrist, in communities founded on eternal truth, and cemented by the blood of saints and martyrs. Infallibility

will rear its mitred front, and its unmitred one too, wherever the declaration of Christ is realized: "For judgment I am come into this world; that they which see not might see, and that they which see might be made blind."

The writer will close the discussion of this portion of his subject, by entreating such persons as feel themselves painfully implicated in its details, to own faithfully the distinction between a flatterer, and the friend who wishes their good, and also sympathizes in their self-condemnation. 'No real Christian is offended at observations which make him look within; and though I should make such sorry, yet I do not repent; nay, I rather rejoice, not that they be made sorry, but that they may sorrow for a season unto repentance after a godly manner: for sorrow before God, is not as sorrow before the world; for godly sorrow produces carefulness; clearing of ourselves; indignation against what we have done amiss; fear of offending in like manner again; vehement desire to amend; zeal for God's truth, and for God's truth alone; and revenge against the delusion by which we have been deceived to betray it*.'

* Dialogues on Prophecy. 1827. 237.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SACRIFICE OF THE MASS—PERVERSION OF THE EUCHARIST IN ANTI-PAPAL COMMUNIONS.

——— the Papacy, that deepest conception, and mightiest achievement of Satan; into which he hath admitted the whole canon of truth, and yet contrived that it should teach only error; into which he hath admitted the whole revelation of light, and yet contrived that it should breed only foul and pestilent darkness. Oh, it is an ample net for catching men! a delusion and bondage made for the world, as the Gospel was a redemption made for the world! No partial error, like that of the Gnostics, framed out of mystic imaginations; or that of the Arians, framed out of the proud arguments of reason; or that of the Munster Anabaptists, framed out of the licentiousness of the will; but a stupendous deception, and universal counterfeit of truth, which hath a chamber for every natural faculty of the soul, and an occupation for every energy of the natural spirit.—Pagan Rome was Satan's work, constructed with *his own* materials of ambition, arms, policy, and knowledge; but Papal Rome is Satan's work, constructed with the materials *of God*, revealed in his holy word.—IRVING.

THE authority of the triple crown cannot be sustained, even among its most abject devotees, without the perpetual motion of the underworks

of the system. We must therefore pass onward to the consideration of the Sacrifice of the Mass, Transubstantiation, and Purgatory.

No human scheme of religion has ever been constructed, without a recognition of the universal fact, that mankind, in whatever degree, are conscious of guilt; that they are obscurely aware of there being *something against them*, an accusing spirit being lodged in every bosom; and that they are consequently fearful lest, in an after-state of existence, they should become obnoxious to punishment. The religion of all nations is *expiatory*—a remark amplified in the twenty-ninth sermon of Dwight's Theology, one of the most munificent offerings ever poured into the treasury of Christian literature. The splendid polytheism of Greece and Rome, in various measures of obscurity, adverted to this fact. The comparatively civilized millions of Hindostan connect it with their redundant superstitions; and savages, abject as the Esquimaux, exhibit some traces of it in the penury of *their* systems.

Papal sagacity, on this occasion also, discovered the policy of meeting the world's prevalent suspicion of its own pravity. It acknowledged the justice of the suspicion; and availed itself of the circumstance, in pro-

viding a ceremonial, by which the sin-struck conscience might be soothed, and its alarms silenced and tranquillized.

But the experiment was critical. Men, if they knew any thing whatever of Christianity, were aware of that leading fact in its history, that Jesus Christ died; and their notion, however confused, was a certain shadowy conviction that his death was a sacrifice for mankind. The least ignorant knew, farther, that it partook of the nature of an atonement for human transgression.—At this point the commander of the papal legions took up one of his all-but impregnable positions. As the sacrifice of the New Testament was made only once, it was found necessary to invent a perpetual repetition of this one great oblation, in order to divert men from the Cross to the crucifix; from the blood-shedding on Mount Calvary, to the altar within the rails of a Roman-Catholic chancel:

——— Hic illius arma,
Hic currus fuit ———

A visible sacrifice, it was foreseen, would act as a continual appeal to the senses. Then came the wafer, the chalice, the representatory, the thurible; prostration, genuflexion, elevation; whispers, intonations; and all the visible, au-

dible, tangible signs, meant to persuade the devotee of the efficacy of this grand process.

A vast collateral advantage also was here derived to THE CHURCH, in the increase of influence thus obtained by the priesthood. *They* alone could transmute the sacred symbol into an atonement. Hence the unknown value of *transubstantiation*. It was an exclusive and permanent patent. To counterfeit it, was, so to speak, parricide, treason, or Deicide. It perpetually strengthened, in the popular mind, the conviction of the immeasurable power of spiritual superiors.

But who discovered the name and pretensions of the Mass? Many a theological book-worm could muster a host of authorities in reply to this inquiry; and I may have often read myself the tale, in a variety of the ecclesiastical annals which form the rubbish of a Christian library. But I willingly leave the question to the antiquarian; to whom it may be as important as the discovery of a coin, or of a tessellated pavement at a Roman station. In connection with the system pursued in this treatise, the investigation becomes useless and insipid. May we not be satisfied with a recurrence to the philosophy which, grounded upon the Scripture, and thought out on the acknowledged

principles of the human mind, informs us with so much clearness, that the service of the Mass is only a necessary link in the fetters forged by Antichrist to retain its victims in bondage?

By whom, and at what period, this specious delusion was imposed upon human credulity, may be therefore abandoned to the compilers of ecclesiastical history. As to the ceremony itself, it is long, elaborate, diversified, and splendid. Yes; it is a veil hung over the true mystery of the Cross. It is made of costly materials, and of a texture impenetrable by the vulgar eye. It is ample in its drapery and folds; richly embroidered with representations of the Crucifixion; ciphered and inscribed with the titles and attributes of The Crucified; exhibited in the solemn gloom of temples, echoing at the time music such as might seem to emulate the strains of the cherubim; displayed and explained by attendants, in vestments and attitudes correspondent to its magnificence;—and the success of the illusion is triumphant! It is this veil which hides the Gospel from a miserable world; from the miserable millions, before whom Jesus Christ is thus literally—but oh how unscripturally!—set forth crucified among them. The actors in this scene never directly inform the spectator, that all true peni-

tents have *boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus!* Alas! the veil is suspended before the holy of holies, and conceals the interior blessing.

Yet such is the exquisite artifice employed in this mysterious ceremonial, that the whole exhibition appears, all the while, to honour the very Saviour whom it degrades, and would force from his throne*. The Missal is not deficient in the language of penitence, and in ascriptions of glory to the *Agnus Dei, qui tollit peccata mundi.* In many places it rests the hope of man's salvation on his death and sacrifice. It recognises his love, his grace, his truth; and this in terms sometimes of exalted devotion; and then, in language approaching to fondness and impassioned affection. But all is neutralized by something which throughout contradicts the first principles of redemption

* 'The Church of England,' says a recent Roman-Catholic historian, 'has never been able to attain, what that of Rome has so perfectly accomplished, to be the religion of the rich and the poor. The secret, perhaps, is to be found in the grand spectacle of the *sacrifice* which the Roman Church presents in her celibacy; which gives her ministry the semblance, if not the reality, of a vocation; while the British Church has all the appearance, and in many cases the reality, of a mere profession.'—*O'Driscol's History of Ireland.* 1827. i. 303.—This writer ought to have said, the sacrifice *of the Mass;* for this is the true secret. As to the constrained celibacy of the clergy, it is, in its very nature, a premium upon libertinism.

by Jesus Christ. Its practical effect tends therefore to persuade men, that they are saved, not by the 'one oblation, once offered;' but by the succession of sacrifices, repeated daily, within the consecrated enclosure of a Catholic altar.

In no part of his system does the success of Antichrist more evidently shew itself, than in the practical revival of the service of the Mass, under the form of the Protestant sacrament of the Lord's Supper,—Jesus Christ instituted a simple ceremony, in commemoration of his passion and death; and said to his servants, 'Do this in remembrance of me.' It might seem to require more than the ingenuity of the human mind, however determined upon evil, to pervert this plain institution from its original purpose.

But it is difficult to say what man cannot do, aided by the inspiration of the rulers of the darkness of this world. He can convert Divine nourishment into poison. He can, and he does, make the Eucharist of the Reformation one of the most powerful of instruments in deluding and destroying the souls of mankind. As a minister of the Anglican Church, I feel this truth with the more bitter poignancy, because of the extraordinary energy and unction dif-

fused over our own Communion Service. It is, as I think, by far the most impressive portion of the Liturgy; and so determinate in its language, as to be quite incapable of perversion, did we not previously know, that the Scriptures themselves are perpetually wrested by bad men to their own destruction.

If the experiment could be made, it might be important to ascertain whether a genuine Hindoo or Polynesian convert, who should for the first time read the service in question, could place his finger on any ten lines of it which, as fresh to his perusal, he would judge to be acceptable to the mind of a self-righteous and formal communicant. In the absence, however, of any such trial, the abuse of this sacrament among ourselves is a standing evidence of the failure of the most definite and unctional language to impart spiritual knowledge. Many persons, therefore, press to the sacramental table, as rebels might crowd to a festival, for the purpose of celebrating the nativity or coronation of their sovereign.

In this connection, let us suppose a case illustrating this inconsistency.—On the night of the 20th of January 1793, Louis the Sixteenth, King of France, being then a prisoner in the tower of the Temple at Paris, convened

a chosen party of Royalists, to the number of twelve, and, during a social repast, addressed them to the following effect: 'Within a few hours, my friends and my companions in adversity, my life will be sacrificed. I shall die on a scaffold; and with me will expire, for a season, the monarchy of this empire. It will yet revive, at a period not very far distant. In the prospect of this restoration, but more especially in memory of my own death, it shall be my last request, that yourselves, and all others who revere my name and own my authority, will occasionally meet together; to join in a social repast like the present, and think of me—my fall, my sufferings, and my death!' The company assented to the King's request, bade him a last farewell, and retired.

After his Majesty's execution, the Royalists throughout France, or dispersed by the increasing storm of the revolution over all the civilized world, observed his dying injunction. The ceremony obtained the name of the CÆNA REGIS, or ROYAL SUPPER; and was celebrated with all the solemnity and tender recollections naturally inspired by the name and sufferings of the father of his people.

Time rolled on; and at length the dawn of the predicted restoration began to redden

the political horizon. Previously, however, to this glimmering of the day, as well as when the darkness actually began to be dispelled, not a few natives of France either fancied themselves admirers of the ancient dynasty of their country, or found it to be their interest to do homage to the still surviving princes of the house of Bourbon.

These men pleaded for admission to the Royal Supper. Their importunity, in all instances, produced surprise, and generally disgust. The partizans of royalty required a certificate of character; and if, in any instance, this could have been satisfactorily obtained, the candidate would have been allowed his prayer. Distinct, however, from such persons as were loyalists from imagination and interest, there was certainly a third party, whose claims were judged to be valid; as, for some years, they had disowned the usurper, given up places of trust and profit which they had held under his government, and shared the fallen fortunes of the exiled family. These were genuine converts; had made a very serious sacrifice to principle; and were, of course, received with open arms by their new friends.

All this while, they who held converse together, as adherents of the royal cause, were

marked men, and objects either of derision or hatred, among the upholders of the usurpation. But no sooner was the abdication of Napoleon looked upon as a certain event, than the mass of his followers began to sue for admission to the rite, which, up to this period, had been exclusively celebrated by the hostile party.—It was also observed, that such Bonapartists as dreaded immediate retaliation on the part of the returning Royalists, were most ardent in their supplication, and most solicitous to obtain the necessary certificate of character. With them it was a matter of life and death,—The general result, however, was, that when Louis the Eighteenth became established on the throne of his ancestors—such was the confusion and revelry of the time—that by degrees this ROYAL SUPPER, once so faithfully guarded and fenced around, in defiance of all intruders, was degraded into a ceremony open to every candidate, and no longer furnished a distinction between the royal and imperial partizans.

Whatever inconsistency may lurk in the accidents of this parable, all I wish to illustrate is, the general desecration of the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ in the churches of the Reformation. At the same time, I ought to be the last person to plead for any thing like

an inquisitorial examination of the pretensions of candidates, in the present circumstances of our national churches. The Liturgy of our Southern Establishment makes, indeed, a sufficient distinction, as far as can be effected by words; and if our ritual were faithfully seconded by all those who use it, the abuse of the Christian passover could not prevail as it actually does.

But we are compelled to turn aside, as in despair, from any theory of this kind, and contemplate the state of things as settled down into practice. In this view, what observer of the religion of the times can shrink from a deliberate avowal of the opinion, that the Eucharist is, at this hour, converted, in a fearful number of instances, from a blessing into a CURSE; that Antichrist has, at this point, regained his empire over human minds; and that the Son of God is thus crucified afresh, at the very moment when a great part of his professed followers crowd to his table, in obedience, as they dream, to his own command, "Do this in remembrance of me!"

But chiefly the infatuation, both of the administrator and the communicant, is discernible in the perversion of the Lord's Supper in the chambers of sickness and death. It is be-

come, among ourselves, equivalent to the kissing of the crucifix among the Roman Catholics; or to the kissing of the crescent in the mosques of Mohammed, where—for all that I know—a Turk who, on his *conversion* to Christianity, knelt before a cross in St. Peter's, may be reconciled to his former communion, by pressing to his lips the symbol of his prophet. Be this as it may, we will proceed to dilate this part of the subject, to an extent in some degree, I trust, commensurate with its importance.

Antinomianism and Self-righteousness, the two permanent heresies of the Christian world, never appear to be so triumphant, as when they delude their victims into a persuasion that they may die safely if they receive the outward and visible sign of the redemption of the Cross; without being equally anxious to derive the inward and spiritual grace from the Redeemer.

CHAPTER IX.*

A DEATH-BED SACRAMENT.

Of Sacraments, the very same is true which Solomon's Wisdom observeth in the brazen serpent: *He that turned toward it was not healed by the thing he saw, but by thee, O Saviour of all.* This is therefore the necessity of sacraments. That saving grace which Christ originally is, or hath, for the general good of his own church, by sacraments he severally deriveth unto every member thereof. Sacraments serve as the instruments of God, to that end and purpose; moral instruments, the use whereof is in our own hands, the effect in his: for the use, we have his express commandment; for the effect, his conditional promise.—HOOKER.

EVERY conscientious clergyman must have felt himself painfully embarrassed with regard to the administration of the Sacrament to sick persons—in cases, it is intended, where the

* The whole of the two succeeding chapters, with very little alteration, appeared in the Christian Observer for January 1814. The subsequent lapse of fourteen years has too painfully confirmed the writer's opinions, as drawn from previous experience; and now strengthened by his having, during the period above mentioned, gained, as he trusts, more accurate knowledge of the human character, and of the spiritual ignorance prevalent among our population.

previous life of the communicant affords no just evidence of sincerity. There is, indeed, in the Liturgy, an office called 'The Communion of the Sick;' but this is drawn up on the supposition of the party's relative claim to the blessings of the Gospel. He is addressed, in the Epistle appointed for the office, as one of the beloved children of God; and the preceding Collect is constructed to the same effect. It may be observed, by the way, that *all* the services of the Church are exclusively applicable to the state and feelings of genuine Christians; for, had it been otherwise, the compilers of the Prayer-book must vainly have attempted to satisfy believers with what was prepared for the servants and friends of the world.

But, to the point in question.—From what I have observed, the anxiety of sick persons (as above characterized) to partake of the Lord's Supper, is generally grounded on a certain obscure persuasion that the physical act of receiving the bread and wine is, in itself, a security against the terrors of a future state. The sentiment is derived from the perversions of the sacrament by the Papists; and is coincident with the doctrines which they uphold on the power of the keys. But, whatever be the origin of this error, we know that similar delusions

are to be found, under various names, amongst almost all divisions of mankind. Superstition, credulity, an appetite for mystery, or whatever we choose to call it, appears to be the natural element of the human mind. It may be traced in the sages of the ancient world, who

> Of talismans and sigils knew the power,
> And careful watched the planetary hour;

and in the moderns of the present age, who, alas! to their own eternal loss, substitute an external ceremony for an internal principle.

When asked to administer the Sacrament to sick persons, I have, of course, endeavoured to explain its origin, use, and abuse; taking most serious care to distinguish between the instrument, and the blessing which it may, or may not, convey. How often have I felt as though I were speaking to the dead; and this, after making the required allowance for illiterate habits and phraseology! Not a glimmering of light has appeared, beyond what was sufficient to render the spiritual darkness visible! On some occasions, I have gathered what seemed to be a resolution on the part of the patient to do the only remaining thing which *could* be wanting to complete the sense of safety; preceding apprehensions, if any existed, having been

generally silenced by the conviction of having *done no harm!* I employ this universal phrase, because of its astonishing diffusion throughout a country enlightened by the Gospel; and very far am I from quoting it with levity! The familiarity of the expression furnishes an affecting illustration of the prevalence of self-ignorance; and can scarcely be uttered by a thinking person without a sigh.

At other times, I have been led to imagine, that the applicant has persuaded himself, on the representation of the people about him, to consent to the reception of the Sacrament, as an act which, at the worst, could not occasion him much hurt; and had on its side the probability of effecting a possible degree of good;—a case somewhat resembling that of a diseased person, who takes a prescribed medicine with a kind of forced credulity that it may do something towards his recovery; while entirely ignorant both of his own distemper and of the philosophy of the art of healing; and a little suspicious, at the same time, that his physician's general practice is rather innocent of evil, than productive of any permanent benefit.

In a third class of persons I have witnessed a determination to communicate, by way of complying with an ancient usage; and their

manner and expression have been such (*mutatis mutandis*), as they might have used in reference to some quaint feudal custom of a manor or borough; which early habit had taught them to venerate, and to regard as sacred from all innovation. These characters are as much startled by any inquiry into their reasons, or into the spiritual design of the ordinance itself, as they would be, if you were to demand an abstract essay on the principles of vegetation annually developed in their corn-fields and pastures. They possess a sort of hereditary confidence in the external rites of the Eucharist; and their domestic history rivets that confidence, by affording several instances of a grandfather, great uncle, or cousin, who finished a *well-spent life* by receiving, what to these ill-instructed Protestants is as indispensable as Extreme Unction to the Papists.

We really do not exhibit the above specimens of religious delusion with any desire to contribute to the reader's amusement; but merely because such things are, and such things proclaim aloud the actual state of our Christian world.

The plainest view of the Sacrament appears to be, that it is a mean of strengthening and

refreshing the graces of those persons who have actually passed, or, at least, who are passing, the line of demarcation which divides the kingdoms of light and darkness; or, as Scougal says, 'peculiarly appointed to nourish and increase the spiritual life, when once it is begotten in the soul. Then, if ever, doth the soul make its most powerful sallies towards heaven, and assault it with a holy and acceptable force *.'—All the names of the institution seem to authenticate this opinion. It is a *Sacrament*, or a solemn oath of allegiance to Christ; a *Communion* of saints, having mystically fellowship with Christ; a *Eucharist*, or act of thanksgiving, performed by persons conscious of having received a gift from Christ; and, finally, a *Feast* on the spiritual passover, in commemoration of the deliverance of believers from sin and death by Christ. Whichever of these five designations we select, the predominant idea of the solemnity is, that of an observance kept by a faithful servant or friend. If such, then, be the fact, I can with no consistency administer the emblems of the crucified Saviour to any

* 'Life of God in the Soul of Man,'—one of the treatises circulated by the Society for promoting Christian Knowledge.

individual who approaches under a suspicious character; and, of course, to no one ranked among the divisions before described.

'What, then, are you the searcher of hearts?' —No: I am too conscious of my inability to search my own. Yet men's lives are the indexes of their souls. If a sick man judge himself to be near death, and, in consequence, desire me to give him the emblematic body and blood of Christ; and if I visit the man, and find him to be the same who, a few weeks ago, lived, to my personal knowledge, a life of habitual profaneness, or sensuality, or covetousness, or extortion, or antichristian levity, or religious apathy; I certainly infer his unfitness to draw near to the Sacrament, with accuracy sufficient, as I think, to justify a refusal of his request. It is no arbitrary sentence; but founded on evidence which, even in the general opinion of the world, would darken the individual's character; supposing, I mean, mankind to decide on spiritual concerns with the same practical impartiality as on matters merely secular.

There is a circumstance connected with this subject, which has struck my own mind with peculiar force; namely, that eminent Christians—as far as I have read and observed—in the near approach of death have not discovered

any unusual anxiety to communicate. It is true, that many, and perhaps the majority of them, have eaten of that bread and drunk of that cup in their last days; but in the case of these exalted spirits, the act is the continuation of a habit; one of the golden links in the chain of their salvation; regarded by them, not as essential, but as highly salutary; not as the one grand effort to be made *in extremis*, but a familiar and pleasant service, gratefully performed, for the last time, in anticipation of the heavenly feast, where they are to drink new wine in their Father's kingdom.

To illustrate this part of the inquiry by the example of godly persons:—It is recorded of Sir Matthew Hale, that, 'not long before his death, the minister told him, there was to be a sacrament next Sunday at church; but he believed he could not come to partake with the rest, therefore he would give it to him in his own house. But he answered, *No; his Heavenly Father had prepared a feast for him, and he would go to his Father's house to partake of it*. So he made himself be carried thither in his chair, where he received the sacrament on his knees with great devotion; which it may be supposed was the greater, because he apprehended it was to be the last, and so took it as

his *viaticum* and provision for his journey*.'—Of Dr. Hammond it is related, that he communicated in private on the Good Friday, and Easter-day, April 22, preceding his death, which took place on the 25th; and, 'amidst his weakness and indisposition of all parts, in the act of celebration his devotion only was not faint or sick, but most intent and vigorous; yet equalled by his infinite humility, which discovered itself, as in his deportment, so particularly in that his pathetical ejaculation, which brake forth at the hearing of these words of the Apostle, *Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners;* unto which he rejoined, *of whom I am chief*†.'—Of Hooker, his biographer writes, that a very short time before his death, his friend Dr. Saravia 'gave him, and some of those friends that were with him, the blessed sacrament of the body and blood of our Lord Jesus; which being performed, the doctor thought he saw a reverend gaiety and joy in his face‡.'—Of Bishop Sanderson‡, the same narrator tells us, that 'the day before he took his bed (which was three days before his death) he, that he might receive a new assurance for the pardon of his sins past, and be strengthened in his way to the heavenly

* Life, by Bishop Burnet. † Life, by Bishop Fell.
‡ Lives, by Walton.

Jerusalem, took the blessed sacrament of the body and blood of his and our blessed Jesus from the hands of his chaplain, accompanied with his wife, children, and a friend, in as awful, humble, and ardent a manner as outward reverence could express.'

Of Pascal we are informed, that, two days before his dissolution, 'the curate, coming in with the sacrament, and saying, "Here is what you have wished for so long," aroused him; so that he became perfectly collected, and raised himself up in his bed, though with some difficulty, that he might receive it. The curate asked him the customary questions respecting the principal articles of faith; to each of which he answered distinctly, "Yes, Sir; I believe it with all my heart." He then received both the Sacrament and Extreme Unction with great devotion, and was so much affected as to burst into tears. When the benediction was pronounced, he replied, "May God never forsake me *." '—Of De Renty it is said, that, after receiving the Eucharist, the only words he uttered were, 'My God, my God, pardon me! I am a great sinner.' His pastor inquiring of him

* Memoirs, prefixed to Thoughts. See an excellent Life of Pascal in the Christian Observer for 1815; drawn up by the late [illegible] Pearson, Esq.

why he spoke so little; and especially as the company present wished for his instruction; 'It is not fitting,' he replied, 'to speak in the presence of the Word incarnate, which I have received; nor to take up any room in those hearts which ought to be filled only with God.' He added, 'that his mind was fixed upon that joy which a creature ought to have, to see itself on the point of being re-united to his first Principle and to his ultimate End *.'

In these, and in other instances which might be collected, what a self-evident distinction is observable between the opinion entertained by devout communicants respecting the origin and end of the Lord's Supper, and the deplorable ignorance of such persons as were before classified! In the one case, we seem to see, 'leaning on Jesus' bosom, one of his disciples whom Jesus loved;' and in the other, we almost seem to hear Jesus saying, 'Behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table!'

On referring to the memoirs which happen to be within reach, I remark, that biography is silent as to the reception of the Sacrament by several individuals who have been numbered

* Life, by Jean Baptiste S. Jure.

among the most distinguished lights of the church of Christ. But as their reception of it may be still a matter of doubt—except in the instances of those among this noble assemblage of believers who departed suddenly—I do not adduce them, otherwise than as probable examples of holy persons venturing into the presence of God without what some might call an indispensable preparation.

Certain, however, of these humble souls have left behind them their definite views of the ordinance in question, to which I shall briefly advert, as corroborating the sentiments already advanced.—Baxter argues; 'God never appointed the Lord's Supper to be chosen and used by impenitent ungodly persons, as a means to convert them. 1. Because it is presupposed, that they be baptized who communicate. And I have proved, that baptism to the adult pre-supposed the profession of faith and repentance; and that it delivereth pardon and title to salvation. 2. Because faith, and repentance, and covenant-consent renewed, are also to be professed by all before they communicate. 3. Because it was ever an ordinance proper to the church, which consisteth of professors of faith and holiness. 4. And the communicants are said to be *one bread* and *one*

body, and to eat *Christ's flesh and drink his blood;* and *Christ dwells* in them *by faith;* and they have *eternal life* hereby. And as for them that say, it is not *saving faith*, but some *commoner preparatory sort*, which is necessary to be professed in Baptism and the Lord's Supper, I have at large confuted them in a treatise of *Right to Sacraments;* and the reasons before and now confute it. I add, that their opinion is destructive of true Christian love: for, by them, no one should be taken for a child of God, and in a state of salvation, for being baptized and a communicant; and so not loved as such. And how poor a charity is it, to love all visible church-members but as the children of the devil must be loved! * '

The *whole* of Matthew Henry's inestimable book on the Sacrament (The Communicant's Companion) is constructed on the same principle; and, in a detached address, he forbids the approach of insincere aspirants, saying, "There is poison in the cup," &c. Doddridge appears to regard the Sacrament as the exclusive right of religious persons; and considers its first reception as a natural introduction into the congregation of believers †.

* 'Catechizing of Families,' &c. 1683.
† 'Rise and Progress,' chap. xviii.

Mr. Bonnell, on returning from the Lord's table, says, 'The glory of my God, with his heavenly host, filled the place. My Saviour impregnated the consecrated elements, and in a manner embodied himself there; yet still remaining where he was, filling heaven and earth, but more particularly our chancel; saying to us, and to me an undeserving guest, "You are all my friends, and worthy, whatsoever your sins be, through my sufferings." But, O my soul, let not what is past content thee: thirst more and more after thy dear Lord, and give up thyself entirely to him; let there be no reserve *.' —'I go to the Sacrament,' observes Mr. Adam, 'to know God and myself; to wonder at the reconciliation of strict punishment with free pardon; to see the greatness of my sin, and the greatness of my hope, in the greatness of the sacrifice therein represented; to sin no more, because I believe there is no condemnation for my sin; to be raised as high as heaven, and humbled to the dust; to be astonished at the mystery of Christ crucified, and to profess that I know less of God than ever †.'—Walker

* Life, by Archdeacon Hamilton; re-published, a few years since, by the Society for promoting Christian Knowledge.

† Private Thoughts; chap. xiii.

argues, that the peculiar design of the Lord's Supper is, 'that believers, therein making profession of faith in Christ and of love towards one another, may repeatedly have the promises sealed to them *.'—'I shall suppose the communicant,' remarks Milner, 'to have renounced his own righteousness, to have come to Christ as his all, with a desire to glorify and enjoy him in this his appointed ordinance. None but such are welcome at the altar; none but such can have real communion with Christ; none but such receive benefit from this service †.'

Let me close with the evidence of Bishop Beveridge, who writes, 'But why, say some, should there be any exception? Did not Christ die for all mankind? And is not that death said to be "a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world?" All this is true, but it does not from hence follow, that all men must be actually saved, and absolved from their sins by virtue of his death. No; it is only they who apply to themselves the merit of his passion, by partaking duly of this holy sacrament, which is the proper means by which

* Familiar Catechism; § v.
† Sermon IX. on 1 Cor. x. 16, 17.

those blessings are conveyed to us; "whereby we are sealed to the day of redemption *." '

What a harmony of sentiment on the essentials of Christianity discovers itself among the faithful, although separated from each other by the various modes of discipline found in the universal church! 'I believe in the communion of saints.'

* Private Thoughts; article x.

CHAPTER X.

CONTINUATION OF THE SUBJECT.

The wicked, and such as be void of a lively faith, although they do carnally and visibly press with their teeth (as St. Augustine saith) the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ, yet in no wise are they partakers of Christ, but rather to their condemnation do eat and drink the sign or sacrament of so great a thing.—ART. XXIX.

THE natural course of this discussion leads us, among other points, to the remembrance of the desperate delusion practised upon themselves, not merely by decent formalists, but by notoriously bad men, on the approach of the last enemy; when they have assumed against him an attitude of defence, by exhibiting the outward and visible sign of the sacrament; as though the very waving of the Christian banner would put to flight the hosts of hell.

The general prison-practice, of administering the Eucharist to persons under sentence of death, seems to have been originally grounded

on the prevalent error of the efficacy of the ordinance, under whatever circumstances it might be received. Alas! how often has the ceremony been resorted to as the last refuge of a guilty conscience; not merely by condemned criminals, but by individuals dying quietly in their beds, though stung by the recollection of years wasted in folly! We may here recollect the deplorable end of King Charles the Second, who, after a life unusually thoughtless and voluptuous, received the Sacrament, and Extreme Unction, from the hands of a popish priest*. This ecclesiastic had been instrumental in saving the King's life at the battle of Worcester; and it is recorded, by one historian, that his Majesty said of him, that he had saved him twice; first his body, and then his soul.

With respect, however, to the custom alluded to, Despard, Bellingham, and Thurtell—as I believe the papers informed the public—com-

* See the note at the end of this chapter.—'The character of Charles,' writes Mr. O'Driscol, 'has been often drawn; and those who have drawn it latest, have drawn it blackest. The troubled politics of the period, the splendour and gaiety of Charles's court, have faded away; and we discern the figures of the pageant, and among others Charles himself, in the sober light with which time, and distance, and death, invest all mortal subjects.'—*History of Ireland*, i. 301.

memorated the death of Christ a few hours before their execution. Yet not the smallest symptoms of penitence appeared in these men, even on the scaffold itself. 'They died, and made no sign.' To these may be added many other appalling examples of criminals dying in hopeless obduracy; and some, guilty of the gratuitous wickedness of plunging into eternity with expressions of fearless contempt. It deserves the very serious consideration of prison chaplains, whether the administration of the Eucharist in cases of this sort—I mean, to criminals whose conduct, after condemnation, exhibits nothing like penitence or seriousness of any kind—has not the dreadful effect of imparting fallacious hopes, and of allaying certain misgivings or alarms of conscience, which, if timely confessed to the minister, might haply end in repentance; for *then* the spiritual assistant would have something to work upon.

With regard, however, to this part of the subject—which has occasioned so much disgust and grief among such as are aware of the Antinomian system pursued in condemned cells—it is too extensive to be discussed in the degree demanded by its notoriety and importance. We will only remark, that the canonization of felons under the shade of the gallows must be,

in its very nature, a premium upon sin. In a country where newspapers are read at the looms of the manufacturing populace, and in the cabins of agricultural labourers, what calculator of consequences can estimate the injury effected, by story after story of desperadoes dying happy; and entering in at the strait gate at last, after having, all their previous lives, thronged the broad road; which *now* would no longer seem to lead to destruction!

The penitent Earl of Rochester partook of the communion with great joy and devotion, and with especial reference to the lively views of the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ which he had derived from the liii d of Isaiah. This nobleman's name is introduced here, in connection with the circumstances of persons under sentence of death, because he regarded his own case as extremely similar; having nothing to offer to God, but a life consumed in vanity and disobedience; so that, if salvation were granted him, he would be as a firebrand plucked out of the burning. Bishop Burnet has indeed canonized *him;* but it was on the very account just stated. He approached the Cross in the spirit of the penitent thief; saying, in effect, 'I indeed suffer justly, for I receive the due reward of my deeds.'

But, to retire from extreme cases: much perplexity is occasioned when ministers of religion observe, in the concourse of communicants, persons guilty of no overt acts of profligacy, upon which they can rest a formal accusation; but among whom may yet be evidenced a tone of character, and a course of conduct, at enmity with pure religion.

We do not plead, that, in such a case, a clergyman should have authority to excommunicate; but how is it that there is not vested, in every spiritual society, a power to separate the unworthy from the worthy? It is true, that, according to the rubric prefixed to our own Sacramental Service, if any 'be an open and notorious evil liver, or have done any wrong to his neighbours by word or deed, so that the congregation be thereby offended,' the minister may forbid him to communicate.

Without staying to inquire, whether this rubric will defend a minister from a law-suit—which may be much doubted—it is observable, that only criminals of scandalous life are to be the subjects of shame; and even then, the congregation must formally express their offence. Yet the Church herself, in her Exhortation to the Sacrament, says, 'If any of you be a blasphemer of God, an hinderer or slanderer of

his word, an adulterer, or be in malice or envy, or in any other grievous crimes, repent you of your sins, or else come not to that holy table; lest, after the taking of that holy sacrament, the devil enter into you, as he entered into Judas, and fill you full of all iniquities, and bring you to destruction both of body and soul.'—In this most awful denunciation, it is highly important to notice, that the Reformers rank blasphemers, and hinderers and slanderers of God's word, as among the worst of sinners, and place them much on the same level with Judas; or, at least, regard them as liable to the arch-traitor's doom.

The question, then, is, what is a blasphemer of God, or a hinderer and slanderer of his word? If a blasphemer be a common swearer, or a person who uses the Divine Name irreverently in conversation;—if a hinderer of the Divine word be a man who neglects his own Bible, and laughs at people who daily study the Bible; or obstructs the diffusion of Bibles among mankind at large; or hates persons who live as the Bible requires them, and secretly grounds his hatred on the conduct which the Bible has produced; or discourages others from reading the Bible, and opposes the growth of scriptural principles among his connections and depend-

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, Where is that assembly of communi-
among whom no blasphemer, nor hinderer
slanderer of God's word, can be found?

In urging this inquiry, I feel that the serious and *exclusive* views of the Lord's Supper, held by many devout ministers of the Church of England, are authenticated by her own formularies *; and, consequently, that her faithful

* One of these formularies makes the following just distinction between the actual reception of the Sacrament, and the spirit of one who, without communicating, is safe: 'If any man, by any just impediment, do not receive the sacrament of Christ's body and blood, the curate shall instruct him, that if he do truly repent him of his sins, and stedfastly believe that Jesus Christ hath suffered death upon the cross for him, and shed his blood for his redemption; earnestly remembering the benefits he hath thereby, and giving him hearty thanks therefore; he doth eat and drink the body and blood of our Saviour Christ profitably

servants do not exceed their commission, when they exercise a discretionary right in regard to the administration or non-administration to the sick. *Here*, at least, there is no admixture of spiritual and secular jurisprudence.

There is another point, on this matter, which I have neglected to mention in its proper place. This is, however, so wisely treated by Bishop Burnet—if we only apply what he says about a death-bed repentance, to the false hopes excited by a death-bed sacrament—that I am thankful, on this occasion also, to occupy the station of a copyist. The reader is referred to the dire effect of death-bed sacraments on survivors. The Bishop writes: 'A minister is not to satisfy himself with going over the office, or giving the Sacrament when desired. If the sick are insensible, he ought to awaken them with the terrors of God, the judgment and the wrath to come. He must endeavour to make them sensible of their sins; particularly of that which runs through most men's lives, their forgetting and neglecting God and his service, and their setting their hearts so inordinately on the world. If they have been men of a bad

to his soul's health, although he do not receive the sacrament with his mouth.'—*Rubric affixed to the Office for the Communion of the Sick.*

course of life, he must give them no encouragement to hope much from a death-bed repentance; yet he is to set them to implore the mercies of God in Christ Jesus. There cannot be any greater treachery to souls, than the giving quick and easy hopes, upon so short, so forced, and so imperfect a repentance. It not only makes those persons perish securely themselves, but it leads all about them to destruction, when they see one, of whose bad life and late repentance they have been witnesses, put so soon in hopes; nay, by some unfaithful guides, made sure of salvation: this must make them go on very secure in their sins, when they see how small a measure of repentance sets all right at last. All the order and justice of a nation would be presently dissolved, should the howlings of criminals, and their promise of amendment, work on juries, judges, and princes: so the hopes that are given to death-bed penitents must be a most effectual means to root out the sense of religion of the minds of all that see it *.'

I have heard an aged clergyman observe, that, in visiting the sick, the *main* advantage he looked for referred to the by-standers, whose day of grace was apparently not yet drawing

* Pastoral Care, chap. viii.

to a close: whereas, if the dying party were ready for the final summons, he so far needed no human assistance; and if unready, the case indeed might not be hopeless, yet a pastor's attendance was all but unavailable. In either case, nevertheless, there were others standing around the bed, who might, with greater likelihood, hear what was said, to *their* eternal salvation.

It is surely obvious, that the giving of the Sacrament to men who have lived a worldly life, is something like assuring their companions, that all will be well with *them* also when they come to die; for *they* too shall receive a full pardon, even on this side the grave. They may, therefore, delay repentance; eat, drink, and be merry; and when to-morrow they die, to-morrow they shall likewise have the usual security against the powers of death and hell.—Oh ye, who are ministers of Jesus Christ, and who have said to your people, 'If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the sinner and ungodly appear?' forget not the value of the souls for which He shed his most precious blood; and beware of awakening a fallacious confidence among the living, by an incautious conduct towards the departing!

Taking the subject upon a still different ground, let me, finally, observe, that, after all,

no thinking person will, as I believe, assert the absolute necessity of the Eucharist to *any* man's safety. The Church calls the sacraments *generally necessary to salvation.* One may therefore suppose circumstances, where neither of the seals of the covenant may be had; but it is impossible to suppose a case where—I refer exclusively to enlightened countries—salvation is attainable without repentance, and faith, and love. And why should I not say to a dying reprobate, 'You may yet be saved, if you repent, and believe the Gospel; and if you do so repent and believe, the omission of the sacrament shall be no bar to your entrance into heaven. But while I cannot, with all my attention and longing for your salvation, see the least discernible symptom of your repentance and faith, I shall not bring to your death-bed the emblems of a Saviour whom, even in this threatening hour, you continue to neglect?'

If this language be called cruel, what epithet would the objector use in describing the priest who attended the dying agonies of King Charles the Second, and—as both thought—extracted the sting of death by administering a consecrated wafer! *

* Father Hudleston's own account of this death-bed

sacrament has very recently been published, by Mr. Ellis, in his 'Original Letters, illustrative of English History: Second Series.' 1827.—'I was called,' he says, 'into the King's bed-chamber, where, approaching the bed-side, and kneeling down, I in brief presented his Majesty with what service I could perform for God's honour, and the happiness of his soul at this last moment, on which eternity depends. The King then declared himself: That he desired to die in the faith and communion of the holy Roman Catholic Church; that he was most heartily sorry for all the sins of his life past, and particularly that he had deferred his reconciliation so long, &c. I then advertised his Majesty of the benefit and necessity of the sacrament of Penance; which advertisement the King most willingly embracing, made an exact confession of his whole life, with exceeding compunction and tenderness of heart; which ended, I desired him, in farther sign of repentance, and true sorrow for his sins, to say with me this little short act of contrition: "O my Lord God, with my whole heart and soul I detest all the sins of my life past, for the love of Thee, whom I love above all things; and I firmly purpose, by thy holy grace, never to offend thee more; Amen, sweet Jesus, Amen. Into thy hands, sweet Jesus, I commend my soul; mercy, sweet Jesus, mercy."—This he pronounced with a clear and audible voice; which done, and his sacramental penance admitted, I gave him absolution.—After some time thus spent, I asked his Majesty if he did not also desire to have the other sacraments of the holy church? He replied, "By all means: I desire to be partaker of all the helps and succours necessary and expedient for a Catholic Christian in my condition." I added, "And doth not your Majesty also desire to receive the precious body and blood of our dear Saviour, Jesus Christ, in the most holy sacrament of the Eucharist?" His answer was, "If I am worthy, pray fail not to let me have it." I then told him, it would be brought to him very speedily, and desired his Majesty, that, in the interim, he would give me leave to proceed to the sacrament of Extreme Unction. He replied, "With all my heart." I then anoyled him; which as soon as performed, I was called to the door, whither the blessed sacrament was now brought and delivered to me.—The King having again recited the fore-mentioned act of contrition with me, he received the most holy sacrament for his viaticum, with all the symptoms of devotion ima-

ginable. For his last spiritual encouragement, I said, "Your Majesty has now received the comfort and benefit of all the sacraments that a good Christian (ready to depart out of this world) can have or desire. Now it rests only, that you think upon the death and passion of our dear Saviour, Jesus Christ, of which I present unto you this figure" (shewing him a crucifix): "lift up, therefore, the eyes of your soul, and represent to yourself your sweet Saviour here crucified; bowing down his head to kiss you; his arms stretched out to embrace you,"' &c. &c.—The rest is much in the same strain, and need not be copied. (Vol. iv. pp. 76—80.) The reader will observe, in this indescribable mass of confusion, that the King's chief point of repentance referred to his having delayed his *reconciliation* —meaning to the Papal Church! As to what is called the short act of contrition, we now find, that the fondling and amatory language of devotion, which modern divines have discovered to be the invention of Methodists and Moravians, was not considered as a disgusting intruder into the chamber of a king; and that none of the hymns and religious biographies and journals published by the followers of Whitfield and Wesley—and which were held up to public detestation by Bishops Gibson, Lavington, and Warburton—contained more revolting expressions of familiarity, than were used by a minister of Antichrist when presenting the crucifix before the eye of an expiring voluptuary! 'Whoso is wise will ponder these things.'—With respect to the *exceeding compunction and tenderness of heart*, and *all the symptoms of devotion imaginable*, which this wretched priest discovered in his victim—as though *he* had the power of discerning spirits, and of accurately observing the transition from spiritual death to spiritual life—it is beyond the powers of language to express what that system must be, which allows its supporters to go such fearful lengths in the arts of delusion and flattery. Would that no analogy to such things existed among ourselves! and that the author of 'Death-be Scenes' had studied narratives similar to the one occasioning these remarks, before he offered *his* sacramental practice to the imitation of a Reformed Church!

CHAPTER XI.

THE ANTICHRISTIAN DOCTRINE OF PURGATORY—ITS REVIVAL IN THE PROTESTANT COMMUNITY.

O Thou great Power, in whom I move,
  For whom I live, to whom I die!
Behold me through thy beams of love,
  Whilst on this couch of tears I lie;
And cleanse my sordid soul within
By thy Christ's blood, the bath of sin.

No hallowed oils, no grains I need,
  No rags of saints, no purging fire;
One rosy drop from David's Seed
  Was worlds of seas to quench thine ire;
Oh precious ransom! which, once paid,
That CONSUMMATUM EST was said;

And said by Him that said no more,
  But sealed it with his dying breath.
Thou, then, that hast dispunged my score,
  And dying wast the death of Death,
Be to me now—on thee I call—
My life, my strength, my joy, my all!

SIR HENRY WOTTON.

PURGATORY is a natural extension of the Papal system of the sacrifice of the Mass. It

defrauds the Son of God of the sufficiency of his atonement, by attributing a share of every individual's salvation to a process distinct from the death of Christ. It divides the glory of the event between a punishment borne for man by a Redeemer, and a punishment inflicted upon man; as though the last were necessary to fill up the deficiencies of an infinite merit.

The *origin* of Purgatory is readily detected, —apart from the self-righteousness connected with the process—in the vast super-addition it confers upon the sacerdotal prerogative. Did the doctrine imply, that the dead could, by their own unassisted energies, release themselves from posthumous penalties; or, that the purificative fires raged for a season, and then spontaneously subsided, it would have been without any assignable value: it never would have caught the attention of a hierarchy which monopolizes all spiritualities capable of impart ing influence, and of exuding silver and gold.

In the natural course, therefore, of the policy pursued by the Papal cabinet, the invention of masses for the dead lengthened out the chain of masses for the living; and, after this fashion, bound together the lucrative concerns of time and eternity. It is thus that the ministrations of the Church of Rome descend,

as it were, into hades; professing to loose the spirits in prison, not from any anxiety to diminish their sufferings, further than may consist with an augmentation of the power and affluence of the Church.

I would remark, by the way, that the doctrine of Purgatory is extremely inconsistent with the idea of a happy death; for who can expire in peace, with the assurance that he directly passes into a region of penal fire? Yet I have read of devout Papists—for such there are—who have approached the confines of the unseen world, not only with tranquillity, but with confidence. Had they forgotten the terrors of the middle state? Or, in the midst of many speculative notions, had they practically looked to the sacrifice of Christ, and to this alone, for salvation? Most serious Christians will answer both questions, I believe, in the affirmative; and will exult in the conviction, gathered from an unexpected source, that the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that truly believeth; notwithstanding he may have been surrounded all his days by the most impure corruptions of Christianity. From such circumstances the religion of Jesus Christ seems to derive another collateral evidence of its vitality and identical nature.

Many clergymen have frequently observed, in the course of their ministry, the natural appetite of the human mind for a something which, in an after-state, is to purify such persons as are, to vulgar apprehensions, too wicked to be directly saved, and too virtuous to be eternally lost. Such a sentiment seems to have floated even in the lofty imagination of Lord Byron. Similar expressions of opinion sometimes manifest themselves, in more humble guise, at the death-beds of our village poor. On such occasions, men, if they say any thing, speak out their meaning; and, certainly, it is an affecting consideration to observe the ignorance, even in theory, of our population concerning the nature of the Gospel, as a remedy all-sufficient for the spiritual distempers of mankind. They seem, as by a kind of depraved instinct, to reject the notion of a freely offered, complete, and unbought salvation; and would seem solicitous, either to plead their innocence of any indictable offence; or, if sin must be confessed, to seek for its pardon between the cross of Christ and some degree of positive merit, or meritorious suffering, furnished by themselves. Reference to this has been already made.

The wisdom of the Papal world is fully aware

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The *origin* of Purgatory is readily detected, —apart from the self-righteousness connected with the process—in the vast super-addition it confers upon the sacerdotal prerogative. Did the doctrine imply, that the dead could, by their own unassisted energies, release themselves from posthumous penalties; or, that the purificative fires raged for a season, and then spontaneously subsided, it would have been without any assignable value: it never would have caught the attention of a hierarchy which monopolizes all spiritualities capable of imparting influence, and of exuding silver and gold.

In the natural course, therefore, of the policy pursued by the Papal cabinet, the invention of masses for the dead lengthened out the chain of masses for the living; and, after this fashion, bound together the lucrative concerns of time and eternity. It is thus that the ministrations of the Church of Rome descend,

as it were, into hades; professing to loose the spirits in prison, not from any anxiety to diminish their sufferings, further than may consist with an augmentation of the power and affluence of the Church.

I would remark, by the way, that the doctrine of Purgatory is extremely inconsistent with the idea of a happy death; for who can expire in peace, with the assurance that he directly passes into a region of penal fire? Yet I have read of devout Papists—for such there are—who have approached the confines of the unseen world, not only with tranquillity, but with confidence. Had they forgotten the terrors of the middle state? Or, in the midst of many speculative notions, had they practically looked to the sacrifice of Christ, and to this alone, for salvation? Most serious Christians will answer both questions, I believe, in the affirmative; and will exult in the conviction, gathered from an unexpected source, that the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that truly believeth; notwithstanding he may have been surrounded all his days by the most impure corruptions of Christianity. From such circumstances the religion of Jesus Christ seems to derive another collateral evidence of its vitality and identical nature.

Many clergymen have frequently observed, in the course of their ministry, the natural appetite of the human mind for a something which, in an after-state, is to purify such persons as are, to vulgar apprehensions, too wicked to be directly saved, and too virtuous to be eternally lost. Such a sentiment seems to have floated even in the lofty imagination of Lord Byron. Similar expressions of opinion sometimes manifest themselves, in more humble guise, at the death-beds of our village poor. On such occasions, men, if they say any thing, speak out their meaning; and, certainly, it is an affecting consideration to observe the ignorance, even in theory, of our population concerning the nature of the Gospel, as a remedy all-sufficient for the spiritual distempers of mankind. They seem, as by a kind of depraved instinct, to reject the notion of a freely offered, complete, and unbought salvation; and would seem solicitous, either to plead their innocence of any indictable offence; or, if sin must be confessed, to seek for its pardon between the cross of Christ and some degree of positive merit, or meritorious suffering, furnished by themselves. Reference to this has been already made.

The wisdom of the Papal world is fully aware

CHAPTER XI.

THE ANTICHRISTIAN DOCTRINE OF PURGATORY—ITS REVIVAL IN THE PROTESTANT COMMUNITY.

O Thou great Power, in whom I move,
  For whom I live, to whom I die!
Behold me through thy beams of love,
  Whilst on this couch of tears I lie;
And cleanse my sordid soul within
By thy Christ's blood, the bath of sin.

No hallowed oils, no grains I need,
  No rags of saints, no purging fire;
One rosy drop from David's Seed
  Was worlds of seas to quench thine ire;
Oh precious ransom! which, once paid,
That CONSUMMATUM EST was said;

And said by Him that said no more,
  But sealed it with his dying breath.
Thou, then, that hast dispunged my score,
  And dying wast the death of Death,
Be to me now—on thee I call—
My life, my strength, my joy, my all!

SIR HENRY WOTTON.

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The wisdom of the Papal world is fully aware

of this confusion of mind, as it universally exists among the children of Adam; and the doctrine of Purgatory was easily invented, in aid of our self-righteousness and of our antinomianism — the two pillars on which we all naturally support ourselves, in prospect of the hour of death and of the day of judgment. Our self-righteousness is our protection against the charge of demerit; and our antinomianism relieves the conscience from the obligations of practical religion, and therefore hides the terrors of a future day of reckoning.

But as apprehensions may yet linger in the mind as to our final safety, notwithstanding *we have done no harm*, and are also deficient in active virtue, the fires of Purgatory—and, oh, how awful is the responsibility of those who uphold such a supplemental salvation! — are ready to burn up the remaining dross; and, in the end, THESE are to concur in presenting us faultless before the presence of God with exceeding joy.

Among the Protestant modifications of the doctrine of Purgatory, may now be mentioned a certain obscure persuasion, prevalent among the lower classes—and far from being unknown among their superiors—of a purgatory on *this side* of eternity, effected by mental or bodily

pain. There is an expression, frequently uttered in sick chambers, both by patients and their friends, that the former 'hope they shall have all their sufferings in this world;' and though the words are capable of a meaning consistent with the purest views of Christianity, they are generally so used as to imply the purificatory nature of suffering; as if the soul were made fit for heaven because of the anguish endured by its receptacle. The notion appears to be the necessary result of an ignorance of the infinite demerit of sin, and of the righteous judgments of God: and such a notion is an essential part of the system of Antichrist. In whatever degree it prevails, is the value of the Gospel lost.

It is also the real origin of the almost universal expression *a happy release;* which, as usually applied, is meant to signify the secure felicity of the departed soul; apart from all consideration of the previous character of the dead, who is thus consigned to the grave with a kind of posthumous flattery; and with an indirect encouragement to survivors to live as *he* lived; that, like him, they may have their last release—when purified by suffering—and enter upon the same security.

It has been well observed, that 'People talk as if the act of death made a complete change

in the nature as well as in the condition of man. Death is the vehicle to another state of being, but possesses no power to qualify us for that state. In conveying us to a new world it does not give us a new heart: it puts the unalterable stamp of decision on the character, but does not transform it into a character diametrically opposite*.'

But of all the errors engrafted upon this article in the creed of Antichrist, none appears to be more insidious and destructive in its consequences, than the persuasion that some men are too good for hell, and too bad for heaven —occupying a neutral tract between the kingdoms of light and darkness; borderers, belonging to neither, and by neither claimed. This is one of Satan's deepest and most successful stratagems in his warfare against mankind. When our sins are not outward, and create no sensible uneasiness of conscience, we would willingly delude ourselves into the conviction that all is well. But the enemy is working in the dark, silently—perhaps slowly; but already anticipating his triumph.

Some individuals are constitutionally so amiable and virtuous, that they might almost

* 'Practical Piety,' &c., by Hannah More. Vol. ii. chap. 19.

be supposed to have been born without the taint of original corruption. Others pursue their profits too busily to leave any time for licentiousness—the passion of avarice expels sensuality. Their pursuits are, in themselves, not merely lawful, but a positive duty: the guilt lies in the spirit in which these pursuits are undertaken and urged onward. Jesus Christ assured the world, that many of its friends would, one day, be overtaken and perish; not as being immersed in notorious sins, but as being overcharged with the cares of this life—too much occupied to be religious. "As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all."

Characters such as these—not directly accused of intemperance, libertinism, and contempt of God; but plausible, and, perhaps, respectable persons, in the opinion of the surrounding world—are, however, the very recusants who, with one consent, begin to make excuse, when the servants of Christ invite them to the spiritual feast. One of them has bought some oxen, another purchased an estate, a

third is newly established in domestic life; and on *these* circumstances are founded their cold refusals. If men declared at once, that they could not leave their lusts for the sake of religion, they would, at least, own their depravity; and, so far, could not be self-deceivers. But when a decent and sedate love of the world stands between a man and his salvation, in the shape of his importance in society, or of his profession, trade, literature, or soundness in theology, how hardly will he be convinced, that the end even of these things is death, if his heart be absorbed in them; and that, as it has been said, he will enter into heaven, as by human impossibilities, as a camel through a needle's eye!

The world forgets, that many sceptics, and deists by profession—such as Franklin, Hume, Gibbon, and many others—possessed a full average share of the morality required by the common usages of society; and were, indeed, in this respect, quite as exemplary as the general mass of such as call themselves Christians. This fact puzzled Warburton, the mightiest master of human learning in modern times, and the haughty champion of Christianity, who frowned defiance against all comers. From this dilemma he, however, supposed

himself to have escaped, when he *discovered* that there were other sins besides those of sensual indulgence, forgery, murder, and treason; such as pride, and its collaterals *. He therefore charged these upon the free-thinkers, and chaunted his hymns of triumph.

But oh the self-ignorance of human nature! If the enemy, in this instance, retaliated, they had only to make reprisals in the form of a similar accusation; and, in this instance,

'Lorenzo, to recriminate was just!'

Warburton never adverted to the fact, that the guilt of the infidel, like the guilt of the

* 'I always,' writes Boswell, 'lived on good terms with Hume; "but," said I, "how much better are you than your books!" He was cheerful, obliging, and instructive; he was charitable to the poor. I shall not, however, extol him so very highly as Dr. Adam Smith does.—Let Dr. Smith consider: Was not Hume blessed with good health, good spirits, good friends, and competent and increasing fortune? And had he not also a perpetual feast of fame? But, as a learned friend has observed to me, "What trials did he undergo to prove the perfection of his virtue? Did he ever experience any great instance of adversity?"' ('Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides;' 1807. 18.)—Such a lamentable specimen of ignorance of the very elements of Christianity, in this writer's attempt to disengage himself from the very same dilemma which embarrassed Warburton, is only cited on this occasion to illustrate the confusion upon which men precipitate themselves, when they do not constitute JESUS CHRIST AND HIM CRUCIFIED as the basis of their system. "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy, and vain deceit; after the traditions of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ!"

decorous man of the world, consisted in sin against the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ—in rebellion against the demands of the Gospel.

While infidels oppose Christianity, its nominal friends are indifferent to it. Their crimes, strictly speaking, are distinct; but the consequence is practically the same. 'How shall we escape, if we *neglect* so great salvation!' And here we arrive at the best definition of the man who is too imperfect to be saved, and too innocent to be lost,—a *neglecter* of what Jesus Christ calls the one thing needful.

A character not very dissimilar from the one in question, was found in the person of the young ruler who addressed Christ, apparently anxious to know how he should attain eternal life. His account of himself was such as might have obtained, from a superficial hearer, a high acknowledgment of his merit. As it was, he awakened in our Lord a certain kind of affectionate sympathy; while, at the same time, Jesus by a word detected his ruling passion,—the love of money; and all the religion of this promising candidate for heaven vanished in a moment. "He went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions;" and the Teacher whom he thus deserted, gave the by-standers a very in-

telligible intimation that the gates of heaven were barred against him, because his heart remained with the world.

On another occasion, Christ said to one who discovered a somewhat unusual degree of spiritual knowledge, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God." This was not saying, that he would certainly reach it. It was rather a caution, not to depend upon his present attainments. The swiftest runner will lose the prize, if there remain but a step between him and the mark. Others will at length overtake him, and win the reward.

Now, in either case, Jesus Christ would teach us, how mistaken we are in supposing the existence of a middle character between the lost and the saved; and, by consequence, the infinite danger of trying to find some purgatorian process, which must consume the remaining dross of a dubious Christian. In reality, he sees an unspeakably wider distinction between the plausible, decorous characters in question, and his own peculiar people; than a nominal Protestant can possibly discern, when he endeavours to draw the line between the good and the evil. The latter judge places on the left hand, those *only* whom he calls notorious and irreclaimable reprobates, denouncing them

as believers neither in God nor devil—a climax with which even the irreligious world connects some shadowy suspicion of a state of future punishment.

In the mean time, Antichrist practises what the Scripture calls, "all deceivableness of unrighteousness;" persuading mankind, how little they need to alarm themselves, if they keep clear of offences cognisable by human laws, and *do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with their God; for this is all he requires.* We quote this familiar and perverted text, as a melancholy example of the manner in which men wrest the Scriptures to their own destruction. It is made to supply the straw, hay, and stubble on which numbers build their hopes of salvation; while fraud, sensuality, oppression, and avarice characterize their conduct in society. To complete their delusion, these persons are so far from walking humbly with God, that their arrogance and hauteur among their fellows are perpetual subjects of their own world's derision, and furnish inexhaustible materials for caricature and satire.

If the author be accused of discharging his shafts from the loop-holes of seclusion; what complaint has the world urged against the popular philosopher, who long since described

its principles from familiar acquaintance with the current opinions and conduct of those among whom he lived on terms of intimacy! Yet this associate with the world informs us, that its own law of honour is a system of rules constructed by people of fashion, and calculated to facilitate their intercourse with one another, and for no other purpose. 'Consequently,' he adds, 'nothing is adverted to by the law of honour, but what tends to incommode this intercourse.' Profaneness, neglect of public worship or private devotion, cruelty to servants, rigorous treatment of tenants and other dependants, want of charity to the poor, injuries done to tradesmen by insolvency or delay of payment, with numberless examples of the same kind, are accounted no breaches of honour; because a man is not a less agreeable companion for these vices, nor the worse to deal with in those concerns which are usually transacted between one gentleman and another.—Again: the law of honour being constituted by men occupied in the pursuit of pleasure, and for the mutual conveniency of such men, will be found, as might be expected from the character and design of the lawmakers, to be, in most instances, favourable to the licentious indulgence of the natural

passions. Thus, it allows of fornication, adultery, drunkenness, prodigality, duelling, and of revenge in the extreme; and lays no stress upon the virtues opposite to these *.'

Let the transcriber of this poignant accusation only add, that, with a few variations of phraseology, the whole charge may be, with equal fidelity, applied to *the law of honour*, as established in low life. All the difference resides in mere circumstantials. The patrician may hide something of sin's deformity under his ermine; the plebeian exhibits, without a covering, the vice, and also its grossness.

* Paley's Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy. i. chap. 2.

CHAPTER XII.

PSEUDO-SACRAMENTS OF THE LATIN CHURCH —PROSELYTISM—SPIRITUAL MONOPOLY IN ALL COMMUNIONS.

His (Gregory's) aim was not so much to turn men from sin to God, and from vice to virtue, as to bring them by any means within what is called the pale of the church, and consequently under the dominion of its rulers; to draw them from the profession of Paganism to the profession of Christianity. If this was effected, he cared not though they remained more than half-heathen still. His zeal was exactly like that of those Pharisees, who compassed sea and land to make a proselyte; which, when accomplished, they rendered him two-fold more a child of hell than themselves.

CAMPBELL.

THE sovereignty of the Papal empire over human minds, has in every age been strengthened by its system of domiciliary espionage. From this, arguing on the principle attempted to be developed and illustrated in these papers, have resulted the Sacraments of Matrimony and Extreme Unction.

Wherever Popery is dominant, no man's house is his castle: its ministers have the pri-

vilege of the *entrèe*. Now the most important events, in private life, are the circumstances of birth, marriage, and death. They are the three centres, circled by the most influential arrangements of private families. In the first of these originated a sacrament, constituted such by Christ himself. He appointed it as a visible means of grace. With the exception of one very limited sect, the members of which consider the injunction as purely spiritual, it has been adopted, and in its plain literal meaning, by the whole of the Christian world. This initiatory sacrament became highly useful in the machinery of the Vatican. For, besides the advantage derived from an elaborate process at the baptistery, it domesticated, on the occasion, sacerdotal persons in houses not their own. It brought them into contact with families under circumstances peculiarly interesting to family feelings; and taught parents and relations unconsciously to connect the magic of priestly influence with the rising importance of the house.

This point being gained, it became necessary to make another grand domiciliary visit, at a moment when nuptial festivities and expectations opened human hearts, and when blessings from the priest might again be peculiarly welcome. To

meet these emotions, marriage was elevated to the dignity and sacredness of a sacrament. It furnished a new source of intercommunion between the ruler and the subject; and a source, not scanty, in supplying the ecclesiastical government with augmented influence, and the governed with a deeper feeling of dependence. It increased the mysterious sensation, that the priest was a kind of presiding genius over the entire system of private life. It was felt that his sanction was essential to every movement of the house; and that only so far as the schemes of a family were connected with the awful institutions of THE CHURCH, could they be regarded as promising the least success.

But chiefly did the inventors of the *sacramental unction*, administered to the dying, discover the potency of a rite which should make an appeal inexpressibly tender and overpowering to human feelings, at a moment when the parent, the husband, the child, the friend, is retiring within the shades of the eternal world. It was a master-stroke of policy, to ordain the presence and mystic ministrations of a priest—I speak not of really pious and pastoral offices, so endeared to the good, and so important to the wicked, at this juncture—as part of the indispensable attendance among

the deepest solemnities of our nature; those which await us in the chambers of sorrow, pain, and death.

If, at such times, the heart be most open to the impressions of true religion, it is also open to the gloomy influences of superstition: so that, under such circumstances, even irreligious indifference becomes alarmed at the sight of itself; and is glad, as it were, to find a sanctuary from its terrors in the presence of a minister of religion, who enters the chamber, as it is supposed, possessed of an ability to communicate pardon and security.

Bad men, in the hour of domestic calamity, are compelled to give themselves pause, amidst the hurry and thoughtlessness of life; and to stand aside, for an interval, from the crowd with whom they are generally intermingled. Catholicity improves the opportunity. It cannot make them true Christians; neither is this its aim; but it makes a timely effort to draw them into more intimate union with *the church*.

Accordingly, when they gather round the bed of their dying relatives and friends, and take, at least, a passive share in the ritual of the Eucharist, and of the Unction *in extremis*, they obtain from these ceremonies a more mysterious reliance than ever on the pretensions

of the priesthood. They witness a member of that order allowing the VIATICUM—a word, in ecclesiastical lexicography, of no trivial import—and accompanying the pilgrim in the last stage of his journey, even to the very confines of the unseen state. The impression among the by-standers is, that the administration of the unction has ensured to the departing soul a favourable acceptance at the tribunal of God.

Oh, bring me not volumes of controversy to prove the precise date of the various modifications of Papal imposture! The system is its own accuser, its own witness, its own judge. When a despot would enslave his subjects, he selects what are judged to be efficient instruments, as the exigencies of the moment rise; and, if there be no counteraction, he succeeds. The usages of the Latin Church in a sick chamber are nothing better than a splendid form of Antinomianism; that general and cherished heresy of mankind, which relieves our willing souls from the burden of responsibility.

It permits, indeed, the ordinary Romanist—for I speak not of the few enlightened individuals who rise above, and virtually reject, the delusion of their own system—to transfer, as it were, his guilt to a sinner like himself. And that sinner is an offender who desperately adds

command. If priestcraft has been indiscriminately charged, by the infidel, upon every branch of the Christian community, this is no refutation of the fact, that an opportunity, at least, for the exercise of such craft, is afforded by sects most opposed to it; as, for example, by persons calling themselves Unitarians.

These adventurers are understood to be very fond of the caustic line of Dryden,

'For priests of all religions are the same*,'

without being quite aware of the recoil of the sentiment upon the minister of a London chapel—whether in Essex Street, or elsewhere—who may perpetually vituperate the authority which his flock, consciously or unconsciously, allows him to exercise. It may, all the while, be the boast of these men, that they think for themselves; but thinking is a troublesome thing to us all. We are glad to

* It has been remarked, that Dryden's real meaning was, that the religions of all priests were the same. The character of this great poet is well known, and is indeed too plainly written by his own pen. He is one of the many examples—for at one time he was *reconciled* to the Roman-Catholic Church—of men who change their religion, and in this manner part with what they never possessed, without inquiring whether their religion ever changed *them*.

do this by proxy, no matter where we profess to worship; neither whether we select Horsley or Priestley, Magee or Belsham, as our priest. In either instance, we provide another to think for us.

Under such circumstances, any teacher who wears the colours of the Reformation, yet remaining a stranger to the spirit of Christianity, will go from house to house, to death-bed scenes and sacraments, in the temper of the sovereign pontiff characterized by Dr. Campbell—not to convert men, but to lay snares for proselytes; or to secure them, if already caught; or, farther, to use them as decoys.

It may, indeed, be justly asked, Ought not, then, ministers of religion to exercise such ecclesiastical discipline as shall bring them acquainted with the domestic opinions and habits of their congregations? Ought not the affairs of daily life to be sanctified by religion? Does not our own Church periodically lament the decay of the *godly discipline* among ourselves? And is not the circumstance pointed out, as a grievous defect in our Episcopal Establishment, not only by Romanists, but by numbers of our Protestant separatists; among many of whose societies the system of inspection is often faithfully maintained, and with excellent

effects?—While we answer all such questions in the affirmative, we are yet fully aware of the distinction between a priest who intrudes into families, in order to swell the number of his adherents and increase his own influence for mercenary purposes, and the minister of Jesus Christ, of whatever communion, who, in his domiciliary visits, has only one object in view,—the salvation of perishing souls.

Far be it from the writer to seem, in any degree, to depreciate the value of pastoral attentions, or to tempt the laity to think lightly of the benefits to be derived from encouraging the ministerial attentions of a faithful guide! The domestic preaching of the week is a most potent auxiliary to the public instructions of the Sunday. Conversation with individuals furnishes a pastor with rich materials for his pulpit addresses. It enables him to take the gauge of the popular mind, with an accuracy which he will in vain try to obtain by studying mankind in books. It will illustrate the sagacity which dictated the advice,

'Deign on the passing world to turn thine eyes,
And pause awhile, from learning, to be wise!'*

Few persons are so ignorant as linguists, ma-

* Johnson—Vanity of Human Wishes.

thematicians, and theologians, buried in the depths of libraries.

But our present concern is with the universal passion of human kind for absolute and irresponsible power. The ministers of any national church, established in power and affluence, most unquestionably have more than human principle, if they resist the temptation to insist upon a monopoly of spiritual rights. Money, and the law of possession, have a logic of their own, defying all the arts of refutation; and we have little occasion to wonder if ecclesiastics, in default of higher subjects, fill their sermons and publications with extravagant praises of the source of their wealth and influence. What a slender acquaintance must these eulogists have with the present state of the public mind! The world out of doors will never be convinced by the arguments of paid advocates. On the contrary, the very assumptions of a placeman, in his own favour, awaken all the suspicions of the members of opposition, and in a moment summon into action the whole of their hostile force. It is then argued, that the motto of true independence is, *Spectemur agendo.*

Dr. Johnson tells us, that, as Prior was one day surveying the apartments at Versailles, being shewn the victories of Louis, painted by

Le Brun, and asked whether the King of England's palace had any such decorations: "The monuments of my master's actions," said he, "are to be seen every where but in his own house." The pictures of Le Brun are not only in themselves sufficiently ostentatious, but were explained by inscriptions so arrogant, that Boileau and Racine thought it necessary to make them more 'simple.' This contrast, between French imbecility and the shrewd good sense of the Secretary to an English embassy, might teach religionists of all parties a lesson of moderation. Mankind are always jealous of commendations lavished upon institutions by persons interested in their security and extension. And the fact is, that our own countrymen would sneer at any among their favourite heroes, naval or military, who should be rash enough to talk grandiloquently about the very victories which may have intoxicated the sneerers themselves with vanity. The British army was only allowed to eulogize itself on the Peninsula, and at Waterloo. At other times it preserves a dead silence: or if a subaltern—like Hotspur in his sleep—begins to murmur tales of iron wars, he ensures the laugh of the mess against him, as an earnest of future promotion.

For the levity, real or apparent, of the preceding paragraph, an apology may be due. But such an incongruous mixture of the comic and the serious is connected with this portion of our subject, as might excuse worse offences against good taste. It is inexpressibly ridiculous, as well as lamentable, to watch the descent of ecclesiastical self-importance, from the cathedral to the conventicle; to contemplate a leader of what is called the *Dissenting interest*—as if there could be any religious interest distinct from Christianity itself—occupying the chair of a dictator, in arranging the concerns of an obscure village-meeting; in utter forgetfulness that he is only acting, in his own narrow sphere, the character which he had anathematized in some neighbouring dignitary; and proving how possible it is for an itinerant to display all the alleged pride and intolerance of prelacy!

The poetical Hogarth of the present times paints, with his characteristic skill, the disappointment felt by a convert, who had read *his* recantation of—it is difficult to say what—in a Dissenting chapel, the managers of which could not bear to be too closely inspected.

'I thought you saints on earth, but I have found
Some sins among you, and the best unsound;

You have your failings, like the crowds below,
And at your pleasure hot and cold can blow.
When I at first your grave deportment saw,
(I own my folly) I was fill'd with awe:
You spoke so warmly, and it seem'd so well,
I should have thought it treason to rebel.
Is it a wonder that a man like me
Should such perfection in such teachers see;
Nay, should conceive you sent from Heav'n to brave
The host of sin, and sinful souls to save?
But as our reason wakes, our prospects clear,
And failings, flaws, and blemishes appear *.'

Without staying, however, to examine any further the parallelism, let us rather *provoke* each other to love and to good works. Under this less popular form of provocation, the ambition both of Churchmen and Dissenters will be exhibited in one and the self-same direction,—the salvation of themselves, and of those who hear them. Here, there will be no source of irritation, and no temptation to recriminate. It will be a system, not of rivalry, but of co-operation; and the question will be—not how many pro-

* Crabbe's tale of The Convert.—Much as I admire the unrivalled powers of this satirist, as a painter of manners, and as an analyst of the human character, I beg leave to add, that, as a divine, he too generally sinks to the vulgar level of ignorance and prejudice, and of hostility to what his present admirer judges to be the religion of the New Testament. In this view, like Swift, and many other dissectors of mankind, he describes what we naturally are; but only amuses or pains us by the description, and leaves us as we were found.

selytes do we respectively number, but—how many converts do we effectually gain to the faith of Jesus Christ? The more this anti-sectarian spirit prevails, the greater will be our success. Our triumph will be less brilliant, and more solid and permanent.

As to minor points, let them remain as they were. No man is called upon to compromise his principles, by working, even with an opponent, on the common territory of the Gospel. Let *A* yet continue to lead his flock to the church, and *B* still head the line of march to the meeting; but no longer desecrate their several pulpits, by displaying the front of Antichrist in the shape, alternately, of Conformist and Nonconformist. Leave to Antichrist the use of his own weapons

CHAPTER XIII.

PENANCES—RELICS—ABSOLUTION—PERVERSION OF THE ANGLICAN LITURGY.

In shirt of hair, and weeds of canvass dress'd,
Girt with a bell-rope that the pope has bless'd;
Adust with stripes told out for ev'ry crime,
And sore tormented long before his time,
See the sage hermit ——
His works, his abstinence, his zeal allowed,
You think him humble—God accounts him proud:
High in demand, though lowly in pretence,
Of all his conduct this the genuine sense,—:
My penitential stripes, my streaming blood,
Have purchas'd heav'n, and made my title good.

* * * * *

But why before us Protestants produce
An Indian mystic, or a French recluse?
Their sin is plain; but what have we to fear,
Reform'd and well instructed? You shall hear.

COWPER.

THE doctrine of Compensations is valued, beyond all names of value, in the divinity of the Sacred College. The Romanists, having gained from their votaries vast accumulations of silver and gold, precious stones, and every other article of value; having also required of them an

implicit submission to creeds and confessions; and having, farther, subjected them to external mortifications, amounting, in some instances, to self-denial, and even self-torture; the question arises, By what means does the church reconcile her adherents to this repulsive part of her discipline? how does she persuade men to endure actual anguish and pain? In more direct terms, How does she *repay* them—for there *must* be some compensation—for their severe losses?

In attempting to think out a reply to these inquiries, I am driven to confess, that although it seems not very difficult to explain the principle on which men yield to moderate degrees of voluntary distress, yet my philosophy has found its line too short to fathom the depth of the fact, that immense numbers of persons among the Roman Catholics have deserted all the endearments of life, suffered almost all things, and done almost all things, for the sake of what they considered to be the truth; and this with the prospect of no recompence, in the least adequate, in a human sense, to afford a competent reward. I refer to the expatriation, poverty, hunger, thirst, nakedness, and exposure to death in its most appalling forms, en-

dured, for example, by Jesuit missionaries; and to the severities practised by some individuals attached to certain modifications of monachism. We understand the motive and the recompence of a patient who endures, for instance, the excision of a mortified member: the prize is life; the alternative, death. We sympathize with a parent who, to save a child from ruin, consigns himself to indigence and the world's oblivion.

But where is any approach to proportion between the martyr-life of a *Josephus a doloribus*, in cloisters more gloomy than those of La Trappe, and the advantage proposed as the final result? Or, if this measure of suffering—as the difficulty appears to class among questions of degrees—be capable of analysis, what enabled Sister Rachel and Sister Felicite to sustain the anguish of an actual crucifixion; nailed, as they were, through the hands and feet, to two crosses, for upwards of three hours; during which, they affirmed, 'that they felt the most exquisite delight;' affecting sometimes to slumber, as if in a beatific trance; and sometimes addressing the spectators in the fondling and babyish language of the nursery? *

* [illegible]ly Review, Oct. 1822; criticism on Gregoire.

Let those who can furnish the natural history of the fact then proceed to explain the counter-part system of torture and excruciation among the Hindoos. I will abandon this department of the inquiry with one remark,—that if Catholicity be, as is contended, the only true religion, because it can inspire its disciples with a calm disdain of agony and death, Hindooism has equal, if not superior, claims upon human credence; a circumstance which must precipitate a Papal apologist upon very thorny perplexities. In the mean time, the doctrine of compensation is perfectly intelligible, when interpreted in connection with the minor sacrifices offered, by the Papal populace, at the shrines of their divinities. A sensualist will fast, if you will allow him a carnival. He will abstain from meat on Fridays, if you will take no notice of a voluptuous life *. He will wear

* The following fragments of a letter (of the date of 15—), very recently published, from Bishop Gardiner to the University of Cambridge, upon the eating of flesh in Lent, and on the pronunciation of Greek, may illustrate also our general subject, being a specimen of the identity of the Roman-Catholic system :—' I have been advertized how divers of the Regents, who should rule, and be good example to others, have this Lent very dissolutely used themselves in eating of flesh; which fault, how it hath been punished here, I am sure you have heard: wherein I have been noted a great advancer and setter-forth of that punishment.—I will have it in any wise punished; for I will not suffer the University with these dissolute

a vest of sackcloth, and wallow in ashes, during Passion Week, on condition of re-assuming the purple and fine linen at Easter. He will even attend daily Mass, if he may regularly retire from the wafer to the pursuits of avarice, vanity, and ambition. He will give the church his public homage on Sunday, provided the church, in exchange, will grant him the rest of the week. In other terms, bad men may be persuaded to observe the outward services of religion, so long as religion does not interfere with the routine of private life, or—what is with them exactly the same thing—the pleasures and gains of the world.

At this point, indeed, we cannot but observe, in passing, that if Christianity itself, considered entirely apart from all other schemes of religion, be capable of a concise definition, the most

manners to be corrupt. Lands have not been given, or lectures founded, for any such evil purposes.—The last year, by consent of the whole University, I made an order concerning pronunciation of the Greek tongue, appointing pains to the transgressors.—The King's Majesty hath, by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, composed all matters of religion; which uniformity, I pray God, it may in that, and all other matters and things, extend unto us; and forgetting all that is past, go forth in agreement, as though there had been no such matter. But I will withstand fancies, even in pronunciation; and fight with the enemies of quiet, at the first entry.'—*Ellis's Original Letters, &c.* ii. 206. Were the gownsmen guilty of no other dissoluteness?

distinctive one would be, that *the Gospel is the religion of private life.* The devotion of the Heathen world might be described as the religion of temples and amphitheatres; the worship of the Roman Catholic as the religion of the oratory, confessional, and cathedral; and the piety of the Protestant as the outward respect he pays to his own public institutions and ceremonies. But each of the two forms of Christianity may, and does, exist, without at all influencing the individual in the devotional retirement of the closet *at home;* or in the character which he may sustain, of child, husband, parent, and member of civil society.

On the other hand, where the *heart* is touched by the Gospel—as the revelation itself is distinct from all the vehicles, and earthen vessels, in which it is presented to the acceptance of mankind—religion equally reigns through the six days intervening between Sabbath and Sabbath. Not only in the sacred hours, but at all times, a genuine Christian bears the impress of his principles. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." The character of such a convert will infallibly display itself—where hypocrites and formalists, of all communions, shew nothing but what may co-exist with the world's decorous forms of insincerity—

in the recesses of privacy; in the arrangements of domestic life; in the social circle; in the transactions of business. "Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. Wherefore, by their fruits ye shall know them."

Catholicity, and indeed nominal Protestantism, in all its ramifications, is satisfied with an adherence to forms, and an indolent assent to creeds. If this kind of allegiance be rendered, the beneficiary dues of the altar not left in arrear, and respect shewn to ecclesiastical officers, all is right. Priests and people sleep on, and take their fatal rest. But the Gospel considers all the public ministrations of religion only as a means subservient to a practical effect in daily conduct. If such effect be not discernible, all the externals of the system are regarded as a cause barren of consequences; or, if productive at all, fertile only in delusion and guilt.

Antichrist, as far as he has endeavoured to introduce the system of self-torture into the Reformed church, has had but slender success. The nominalists, indeed, of that communion may, in certain instances, hesitate to touch a card in Passion Week, or confine the luxuries of their tables during the Fridays—perhaps also the Wednesdays—in Lent, to fish and

vegetables; or abstain from breakfast on the mornings of sacramental Sundays; or make sacrifices equally painful, with the prospect of being repaid when the season of periodical penitence is expired; but this is the amount of their debts. The cost of such performances is easily counted, and as easily discharged; and if this were all, we might smile, and leave the purchaser to enjoy his gains. But *hæ nugæ in seria, &c.* They who deem such things to be really valuable, are under the same *kind* of delusion as the slaves of the Papal superstition. They are not indeed *convalescentaires*—nothing like them; not to be mentioned on the same day—and the *merits* of the two parties are as a mite to a talent. The greater, then, the infatuation of such Protestants, as would attempt to bribe Heaven at a price so poor, and so inadequate, in the estimation even of a self-righteous devotee!

The sacrifices demanded by the Gospel 'are in no way allied,' says Dr. Chalmers, 'with the penances and the self-inflictions of a monastic ritual, but are the essentials of spiritual discipline in all ages; and must be undergone by every man who is transformed by the Holy Ghost from one of the children of this world to one of the children of light. The utter re-

nunciation of self; the surrender of all vanity; the patient endurance of evils and wrongs; the crucifixion of natural and worldly desires; the absorption of all our interests and passions in the enjoyment of God; and the subordination of all we do, and of all we feel, to his glory; these form the leading virtues of our pilgrimage; and in the very proportion of their rarity, and their painfulness, are they the more effectual tests of our regeneration *.'

To recur to the topics more immediately under discussion; and to descend from the pure and elastic atmosphere we might inhale in the high regions of Christianity, into the dark profound of its corruptions; I observe, that the pontifical treasury distributes RELICS, as one article of remuneration for its penances and mortifications. They are deposited in cabinets with fond and sacred devotion; as an officer locks up the epaulette of the uniform in which Nelson fell off Trafalgar: or they are exhibited, as we shew, at the Tower, the armour of a line of kings, and the spoils of the Spanish Armada. They are to devotees what keepsakes are to our rustic swains. We, the children of the Reformation, laugh at the relics and their manu-

* Preface to Thomas à Kempis' Imitation of Christ, &c. Glasgow: 1823.

facturers, and have many a pleasant tale to tell about this department of imposture; but the sagacity of the court of Rome here returns the laugh upon ourselves, and recognises in these baubles a value which no derision of a heretic can diminish. Is there no compensation to a Catholic mind in the possession of what once belonged, as it thinks, to a saint or a martyr?

But, leaving what may be considered a very inferior point of examination, let us advance to the grand machinery of ABSOLUTION. No one needs long to hesitate in ascertaining the super-eminent importance of this movement in the compensatory apparatus of the Roman Catholic communion. Christianity has probably received her most cruel wound from this instrument of her enemy's power. The weapon thus formed against her has indeed prospered; and will go on to prosper, so long as the evangelical prophecy is not more fully accomplished.

Consciousness of guilt produces in human bosoms various degrees of uneasiness and alarm; and considerable sacrifices will always be willingly made to obtain composure. No fact in the history of mankind is more obvious than this. It was accordingly seen, that a conscience disordered by a sense of sin demanded a cure; and Popery administered an opiate. This is a

medicament which suspends irritation and pain, but leaves the distemper as it was found; or, rather, it increases its malignity, and, in such cases, superinduces new forms of disease.

But what patient is there, who is not eager to soothe paroxysms of pain; and to obtain even a short respite from its bitterness, by whatever means he finds to be successful? He takes the tranquillizing draught; and has the prospect of a few hours' repose. This is precisely analogous to the vulgar effect of remission of sins among the Papal populace. Their transgressions are not forgiven; but the consciousness of their existence, and the punishment due on their account, is from time to time suspended. The opiate is administered, and they sleep.

But who does not discern the incalculable value of having this medicament *at command*? The Church of Rome may amply repay the fines she exacts in the shape of fees, fastings, ceremonial observances, and restrictions; when she gives back in return, to guilty minds, even an indistinct and unsatisfactory persuasion that their iniquities are forgotten.

Now, in the indiscriminate and gregarious administration of absolution, the sacerdotal boon is bestowed, not when vice is forsaken—for this cannot be known—but lately when it

is confessed. The confession may be insincere, yet the remission is plenary. It is *therefore* most grateful to the confessed; and *therefore*, also, the possession of the powers of absolution is numbered among the richest sources of pontifical influence.

Such is the machinery of compensation, as put into action by the religion of human nature under the name of the Holy Roman Catholic Church. How despotic is its form of government; and yet how dependent, for its very existence, on the abjectness and degradation of its subjects! For the secret truth—part of the underwork of the whole system—is, that, while the hierarchy of Rome professes to be entirely independent of human opinion, it is, all the while, the veriest slave to those whom it affects to despise and to rule with irresponsible right. Covertly it flatters men's vanity; confirms their universal self-righteousness; and, as before suggested, upholds for their sake a magnificent scheme of Antinomian delusion.

Does any Christian philosopher feel the possibility of doubting that Antichristianity has deluged the world with its doctrines, by a skilful adaptation of them to the prejudices of a sinful race; by encouraging on the one hand, what it professes to disallow on the other; and

by reaching the climax of its guilt, when it succeeds ultimately in teaching its adherents the dreadful art of being satisfied with themselves and with their deceivers?

So that the superstition of the Romanists, when exposed in the nakedness of its character, is discovered to be nothing more than one division of a wicked world holding in captivity the rest, and by means of fetters forged by the self-same slaves whom they bind. It is the few, who have gained the ascendancy, domineering over the many;—the many, as in the instance of absolution, being more than willing to transfer to the few their own guilt and responsibility; and the few having the terrific power of assuring the majority of their ability to sustain the pressure, and to effect also the removal of the burden. It is thus that, by the ministrations of Antichrist, bad men gain what they want,—a regular licence to live as they please; and a provision against the alarms of death, by periodical acquittals at the bar of the assumed vicegerents of Heaven.

Whatever may be said of this statement, as being an unfair account of the matter, and a detail, not of the doctrine of absolution, but of its abuses; I answer again, that, in all human concerns, we must argue on them, not as they

exist in the refinements of theory, but as settled down in practice; when a recurrence to original principles only suffices to prove, that these tenets lie buried in obsolete statutes, forgotten and inefficient, derided and despised.

Besides; we will venture to assert, almost without the fear of contradiction from Papists themselves, that if absolution were pronounced exclusively on sincere penitents — supposing such sincerity were ascertainable—the confessionals would be deserted both by priests and people; the popularity of the invention would be changed for undisguised hatred; the charm of the mighty sorcery would be dissolved; and the foundations of the 'eternal city' shaken.

We will now retire for a moment from the Antichristianity of Rome, to mark what the adversary of God and man has achieved among the formal members of our own cherished Establishment. We have, in our ritual, two forms of absolution. On that in the Office for the Sick, it may be expedient to be silent; as it has almost universally fallen into disuse. Of the form succeeding the General Confession much has been said, as to whether it simply declares, or directly conveys, forgiveness.

As might be expected, the Antinomian or Papal side of this question has been warmly

espoused by the nominalists of our church. They insist upon the fact, that the *priest* * — a designation of the pastoral office exceedingly acceptable to persons of their character — by the pronunciation of the formulary in question, actually imparts, to the repeaters of the Confession, a certain measure of pardon. To all practical purposes, this is a counter-part to

* From the uncertainty of language, and from less innocent causes, the public formularies of any communion will be open to various, and even contradictory, interpretations. The term *priest*, if synonymous with presbyter, has a harmless meaning: if used in the Papal sense, as designating one who offers *sacrifices*, it becomes an illustration of what Mirabeau said—and he was fully aware of the import of the observation—that 'words are things.'—As an example of the eagerness of the Papalizing party in a Protestant church to bend words to their purposes, we find Heylin attempting to prove a Real Presence to be acknowledged in the Anglican Church by the doctrine of the Catechism, as well as by the authorities of Bishops Ridley, Bilson, Andrews, Morton, and Dean Nowell. He sums up the evidence by stating: 'It is agreed on both sides (that is to say, the Church of England and the Church of Rome), that there is a true and real presence of Christ in the holy Eucharist; the disagreement being only in the *modus præsentiæ*.' (*Cyprianus Anglicus*. 1671. 22.) This writer pleads for the plenary power of the *priest* in giving absolution. He also denies the moral obligation of the Sabbath; while he seriously enforces the duty of bowing towards the East! I have sometimes read such authors as Heylin, Collier, and Laud, till I have wondered whether these men really believed that Christianity had any other object than the establishment of sacerdotal power, and of rites and ceremonies. It is, at least, evident, that they were extremely jealous of the Reformation, and wished to restore the discarded system, provided they might re-possess themselves of Papal authority, but without sharing it with foreigners.

the Papal transfer of guilt from the people to their minister, and an opiate to the Protestant conscience. If the confessors, thus deluding themselves, were really and truly anxious to ascertain the sincerity of their repentance and of their reliance on the sacrifice of Christ, they might indeed derive consolation from the language of the Absolution; but no farther than as they would obtain similar comfort from the declarations of forgiveness in the Scripture to all penitent believers; and, farther, from such sermons as illustrate and amplify those declarations, and thus fulfil the prophecy, as interpreted by the Son of God, when he said, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor: he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind; to set at liberty them that are bruised; to preach the acceptable year of the Lord."

The consolation of the Gospel, therefore, is doubtless proclaimed in the Absolution; but with no greater efficacy than in other ministrations to the same effect. In all cases, the authority of the minister is the same; and the Spirit of God can equally convey grace,

whether his servants pronounce from the desk, or preach from the pulpit.

No church can be responsible for the abuse of its ritual by Antinomian formalists. If the Book of Inspiration itself be forced into the service of sin by the glosses of bad men—as when a libertine justifies himself, on the plea that Christ said to the woman taken in adultery, "Neither do I condemn thee"—we need not wonder if uninspired formularies, imperfect and ambiguous as they must necessarily be, should receive the same treatment; and if, in consequence, the Liturgy of a reformed church should be compelled to aid the Missal and Breviary in extending the delusions of Antichrist.

CHAPTER XIV.

PAPAL HOSTILITY TO THE SCRIPTURES.—THE SUCCESS OF ANTICHRIST IN THE PROTESTANT CHURCH IN IMPEDING THEIR CIRCULATION.

In times o'ergrown with rust and ignorance,
A gainful trade the clergy did advance;
When want of learning kept the layman low,
And none but priests were authorized to know;
The mother-church did mightily prevail:
She parcell'd out the Bible by retail;
But still expounded what she sold or gave,
To keep it in her pow'r to curse or save.
Scripture was scarce, and, as the market went,
Poor laymen took salvation on content,
As needy men take money good or bad—
God's word they had not, but the priest's they had.
At last, a knowing age began t' inquire,
If they the book, or that did them, inspire;
And, making narrower search, they found, though late,
That what they thought the priest's, was their estate:
Taught by the Will produced, the written word,
How long they had been cheated on record.
* * * * * * *
The Book's a common largess to mankind,
Not more for them than ev'ry man design'd;
The welcome news is in the letter found,
The carrier's not commission'd to expound;
It speaks itself; and what it does contain,
In all things needful, to be known is plain.—DRYDEN.

IN pursuing the melancholy course marked out for an inquirer into the system of Popery, I

shall remind the reader, that it can survive only so long as the governors and the governed reciprocally obey each other. There must be a perpetual interchange of despotism and submission.

Of all mankind, Papists are the most consistent patrons of the doctrines of passive obedience and non-resistance: and necessarily are they so; because the plebeians of their church yield their submission on a certainty that the aristocracy will and must support the course of policy already established. Their loyalty has nothing in it of the dignity of an unbought and patriotic obedience. A loyalty of principle can sustain, without murmuring, the opposition of a legislature, and not indulge a spirit of sedition. On the contrary, a Catholic populace are at once enslaved and feared by their despotic government. They are Catholics, just while the Pope of the day ratifies the plans of his predecessors.

The head of the Papal empire is to his adherents, what Napoleon was to the military population of France. He was the idol of the army, because he led them to plunder and martial glory. They adored him as a genius of extraordinary address, in directing and completing their own selfish projects. But had he, in the full career of his success, abandoned the lust of conquest, declaimed against the

criminality of unprovoked warfare, and invited his Invincibles to retire with him to the quietness and useful arts of peace; he would probably have soon come to his end, and there 'would have been none to help him.'

Let the generalissimo of the Papal armies make a parallel experiment. Let him issue a bull, under all the talismanic authority of the fisherman's ring, tending to reduce absolution and the power of the keys within the severe restrictions of the first Apostles; let him hint a suspicion of the efficacy of relics, indulgences, and rosaries; and *his* infallibility would doubtless disappear.

The philosophy of inspiration describes, indeed, with the plain emphasis of Scripture, the compromise which will invariably take place between the teachers and taught, in all religions not truly modelled upon the word of God. "The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; *and my people love to have it so.*" A collection of correspondent texts would readily detect the causes and consequences of such combinations; and would vividly illustrate the fact before asserted, that the proudest pretensions of infallibility rest on no foundation more honourable than an abject subserviency to human passions.

We have been hitherto silent on one leading tenet of the Vatican—namely, the authority of TRADITION; considered, as it is, to be a necessary commentator, on the side of the Church, upon the Holy Scriptures. It has been said, on certain occasions of political jealousy, that there was something behind the throne greater than the throne. This paradox has a parallel in the circumstance, common, though in different degrees, to the Papal and Protestant divisions of the Christian church: there is too often, with many who profess to reverence and appeal to the Scriptures, something practically greater in its influence than the Scriptures themselves.

A *mere* Papist and a *mere* Protestant—meaning by the epithet to mark out men who know nothing of religion, but as partizans of rival sects—will always find the Bible an obstacle, which both of them cordially wish to be removed; at least, as to its real spirit and design. It blocks up the progress of every kind of sectarianism and intolerance.

I am aware, at this point, of the difficulty of avoiding a revival of the now quiescent controversy on the Bible Society*. Extremely thin

* The above was written in 1825. The debate has been, however, painfully revived since, in consequence of the

partitions, in some instances, divide the debates raised among various members of the Reformed Church, from the standing dispute on the exclusive authority of Revelation between the general body of the Reformation and the defenders of Papal tradition. A cardinal, who forwards a rescript against the indiscriminate circulation of the Bible among Papists, in a Protestant kingdom, is, *to all practical purposes*, the ally of such Protestants as write pamphlets against the diffusion of the Scriptures among the subjects of the British Crown.

In either example, the effect would be to

Apocryphal question. It is highly satisfactory to the members of the Institution, that two such consequences should have resulted from the discussion, as the withdrawing of spurious Scripture from further circulation, and the justification of the recent translations against the accusations of every opponent. It is impossible not to be surprised at the extreme temerity of those adversaries who profess to uphold the cause of the Established Church by attempting to weaken the Society; when the Liturgy contains a different version of the Psalms from that in the authorized translation of the Bible. How could it be forgotten, that, in the instance of Psalm xiv., the Prayer-Book contains three verses not to be found in the Old Testament; and that Psalm cv. 28 is translated contradictorily — to say nothing of many passages which, in different degrees, are inconsistent with each other! Yet the Serampore translators, and their co-operators elsewhere, are not to be forgiven *their* imperfections.— Let it also be remembered, that, within these few years, the common Oxford editions of the Bible were discovered to contain upwards of twelve hundred errors.

restrain mankind from discovering religious truth, otherwise than may subserve the interests of an exclusive church. Anti-biblists, whether Transalpine or Cisalpine, are afraid of trusting the Bible *alone*. If abandoned, as it were, to itself, without a guard or corrective, they dread its exposure to the world; lest general readers should injure it by undue familiarity, or lest it should injure them by its alleged obscurity and liability to perversion. Such is the essence of all the apologies ever offered for the detention of the sacred volume in ecclesiastical custody. The defence assumes the language of reverence with regard to revelation; and of affectionate caution in reference to the people who are *not* to read it. But as there were Judaized Christians in the earliest periods of the church, so at all times there are Papalizing Protestants in the very heart of the Reformation. A centre of union is found, where the nominalists of every communion meet.

Even the Unitarians, and the followers of Swedenborg—sects utterly opposed to each other—are yet so entirely dissatisfied with the New Testament in a plain, simple version, that the first of these complainants have given the world an 'Improved' Translation, with cautionary notes; and the second declare it to be

unintelligible, unless by the commentary of a Scandinavian baron. What an unintentional satire is this upon the magnificent pretensions to traditionary power at Rome; and, we may add, upon the determination of those among ourselves who would forbid the circulation of the Scriptures, unless their course be directed and accompanied by an interpreter!

Bishop Stillingfleet, in the progress of his Apology for the unrestricted use of the Bible, says, 'We come to consider, whether the reading of the Scriptures be the cause of all the sects and fanaticisms which have been in England? Our opponent might much better have charged the philosophers, especially Aristotle, with all the disputes of the world; for they not only, by their writings, have occasioned many, but have taught men the pernicious use of reasoning, without which the world might be as quiet as a flock of sheep. If they could but persuade men to lay aside that mischievous faculty, I dare undertake for them, that, let the people have the Bible never so much among them, they shall never hurt the Church of Rome.—But why are we not all of a mind? I would fain know the time when men were so. This variety of sects was objected against the Philosophers, and thought no argument then.

It was objected against the primitive Christians, and thought of no force then. Why must it signify more in England, than ever it did in any other age or place? * '

The transition is natural, from this portion of the subject, to the identity of feeling existing between our insular and continental adherents to the infallibilities of their respective modifications of priesthood. The moderation of the Anglican Church—illustrated, for example, in her Nineteenth Article—has long been a source of almost undissembled irritation among ecclesiastics wishing to invest her with an authority which she disclaims, and corresponding with that of the triple crown. They have languished, but in vain, to find in the *lex scripta* of the Church of England a scaffolding capable of supporting their own opinions on the height of spiritual intolerance.

Whoever charges these remarks with harshness, or even novelty, must have read ecclesiastical history to very little purpose. Especially, he must have consulted the *scriptural* records of the church without gathering the instructions they obviously inculcate. Let him, for a moment, contemplate the character and

* 'Discourse concerning the Idolatry practised in the Church of Rome,' &c. 1676. 235.

deeds of the Jewish Sanhedrim; of the chosen council of the chosen people, headed by the high priest and the rulers. Let him then reflect, that, among the first twelve authorities of the Christian church, one of them had a devil; and that, in every subsequent period, experience has perpetually confirmed and illustrated the estimate formed in these papers respecting the tendency of the visible church to degenerate, and to strengthen its alliances with the rulers of the darkness of this world. Neither are the extravagant claims of the sacerdotal order preferred only by priests attached to affluent and influential establishments; but they exude, in subordinate degrees, from the ministers and patrons of the minor sects. Luther said, that every man had a pope in his own heart. The love of absolute authority is inherent by nature in every human bosom. Hence an Episcopalian formalist of the present times would repose on the decisions of a Convocation, were it allowed to sit, as devotedly as if it held its sessions in the Apostolic chambers of the Vatican; *because* he would find, or think he found, in such decisions, an echo to his own prejudices. By a similar process—*mutatis mutandis*—an ignorant sectary would cling to his own peculiar forms or favourites.

We are not discussing the merits or demerits of the decrees of Convocations, Conferences, or other Ecclesiastical authorities—which, doubtless, like other expressions of human opinion, have their respective virtues and vices—but our object is to illustrate the slavish and selfish make of those minds which submit to these several decrees, simply on account of the acts in question having been passed by *their own* legislatures. How many victims of prejudice, without any knowledge or practice of genuine religion, marshal themselves under the standards of Protestantism, which they prefer to the banners of the Holy Father, or of Mohammed, only because their native soil was not within the territories of Rome or Constantinople!

To many persons, who watch with anxiety the clouds gathering around our horizon, few subjects are of more painful interest, than the triple conspiracy formed by Papal, Protestant and Infidel partisans against the unrestricted circulation of the Scriptures. After every explanation furnished by the members of this coalition, it is impossible not to detect the identity of their objections; as all the three parties discover the Bible to be their irreconcileable enemy. The Papist finds it meeting him on his path, like an accusing spirit; and

harassing his conscience by its perpetual apparition. The Protestant and the Infidel are haunted by the same unwelcome visitant. 'Look, where it comes again!'

Apologists may make refined distinctions *, and plead their anxiety to shelter truth from abuse; and may do this in the character of

* 'When J. K. L. said, that an Irish peasant would probably learn more, and be more deeply impressed with the moral truths of the Gospel, by having them communicated to him, in a mode analogous to that adopted by the Almighty, in a good part, for the instruction of the Jewish people, than such peasant would by the indiscriminate use of the Bible without note or comment, he may have had his mind occupied with the history of those remote times, when Ireland was the seat of European learning, the seminary of her apostles, and the island of Saints—a time when the Bible was not yet translated into Irish, when the copies of it were few, and when the bulk of the people could not possibly have access to it. Or his imagination may have been turned to the horrors of the Puritans and Independents; to the crimes committed by those numberless and nameless sects, who, with the Bible in their hands, and its texts upon their tongues, violated all laws human and Divine! Paley, Locke, and Burke concur in disapproving of the indiscriminate reading of the sacred Scriptures by all persons; the Synagogue disapproved of it; the Catholic Church disapproves of it; the most eminent bishops of the Established Church in England and Ireland have disapproved of it; Doctor Elrington *ought* to disapprove of it; J. K. L. does no more than disapprove of it; and in saying that it is not necessary to make men good Christians, he only expresses the voice of philosophy, of antiquity, of what he may call Divine and human wisdom. If this be his crime, he is guilty, and guilty of an offence in which many better men participate.'—'*Reply to the Charge of Dr. Elrington, Law Bishop of Leighlin and Ferns; by the Right Rev. Dr. Doyle, &c.*' 1827.

Christians. They may also be supported by Deists; professing to be jealous, on their side, of the subjection of the human mind to a system so dubious, in their view, as the philosophy of Revelation. But of what are these several Antichristian conspirators afraid? Of the interference of the Bible with their ways of life!—Apply what has been said of vulgar or refined infidels, to this unnatural confederacy among laymen and ecclesiastics, ostensibly of the schools of Bellarmine, Luther, and Calvin, but practically discipled by Bolingbroke, Gibbon, and Voltaire: '* You will not suppose that these men have been convinced of the truth of infidel principles, or of the falsehood of those which are contained in the Scriptures. They are merely men who love sin; and, without conviction or evidence, hail whatever will enable them to perpetrate it in peace. It is scarcely possible that an infidel should not encourage vice in others, as well as foster it in himself. This he does without, as well as with, design. To quiet his own conscience, he is obliged to justify his conduct to others; for

* Dwight's Travels, 1823. iv. 380; 362, 3, 8. The extracts in the text are dismembered. The whole of the author's statements deserve to be attentively read. They indicate the same genius and practical wisdom which distinguish his 'Theology.'

the countenance of others is the only real support which he finds, either for his principles or his practices. For the same reason also he feels himself obliged to attack the Scriptures, and the whole system of virtues which they enjoin. The religion which they teach he styles superstition, enthusiasm, and fanaticism. In this manner every infidel degrades religion in the eyes of the little circle around him, and emboldens them to the commission of sin. All his conduct, however decent, is at the same time vicious.—The philosophy ' of the modern unbeliever ' is not designed to instruct or convince; but to amuse, perplex, and beguile. It is addressed, not to men of learning and understanding—the persons who should be addressed in every abstruse discussion—but to the ignorant, unthinking, and vulgar. It is directed not to the understanding even of these; but to their weaknesses, prejudices, and passions. That men of talents should be willing to write in this manner, has certainly the appearance of paradox. Its explanation is easily found in the purposes for which all this has been done. One of these was to extend the reign, multiply the means, facilitate the progress, and establish the quiet of sin; the other, to place the world beneath the feet of pride, ambition, and

avarice. That philosophical sinners should wish to reign and riot involves no enigma.—You may perhaps be astonished that men, such as these, could do harm at all. In my apprehension, they were exactly fitted for a sphere of mischief of vast import in the empire of destruction; which, perhaps, no other men could have filled. Satan needs his scullions and scavengers, as well as his nobles and heroes.'

Persons, unused to contemplate the signs of the times, may be disturbed by the risings of surprise—perhaps of resentment—on finding ecclesiastics, and masters of theological science, classed with the open enemies of Revelation. But let them pause at the fearful fact, that Antichrist, at this hour, is directing the combined efforts of all his legions against the written Word of God. 'The invasion of the Continent by British zeal, and especially the rapid and widely diffused efforts of the Bible Society, summoned to arms, as with the shrillest clarions of alarm, the entire soldiery of the kingdom of Antichrist; and the war, raging from the head-quarters of Mohamedanism itself to the western division of the British Empire, and to aid which too many professed Protestants have joined the unholy alliance, is, practically, a gathering together of the nations

against the Bible. This, indeed, is its one, distinct, avowed, determinate object. It is not an expedition fitted out at Constantinople, or Rome, or at some subordinate arsenal and port of the Antichristian empire, against any specific fortress of the Reformation; but the point of attack is THE BOOK, which, according to its various enemies, contains the elements of universal mischief. As once, at Ramoth-Gilead, the King of Syria commanded the captains of the chariots, saying, "Fight ye not with small or great, save only with the King of Israel;" so, in the present thickening conflict, the instructions delivered to the commanders and subalterns of the forces in array against us, when divested of the formalities of office, are, "Oppose not specifically the Consistories of the Lutheran Church, the Hierarchy of England, the General Assembly of Scotland, or even the Conventicles of Independency, Methodism, Unitarianism, or Antinomianism; but *fight only* with the Volume containing the professed foundation of these multifarious heresies; lest this charter of evil should be yet further disseminated, and ultimately shatter the authority of the Conclave and the Divan; refute the infallibilities of the Koran and the Missal; and involve in one common ruin the holy places of

St. Peter and St. Sophia *."' Disguise the fact how he will, this is the strongest position Antichrist is manœuvering to take up, in his warfare against Jesus Christ. He has already succeeded—and we know where—in persuading certain Protestant advocates to surrender the principle of the Reformation, as recognising the spiritual supremacy of the Scriptures. He has taught them to be afraid of throwing them open to public inspection. The patient is not to be trusted with the remedy, although the disease increases, and the symptoms denote a crisis.

Before the close of the present chapter, we will only recur to one collateral topic, but of great interest to ministers of religion—I mean, the jealousy of a public instructor, with regard to his flock becoming familiar with what he may be disposed exclusively to regard as the *liber sacerdotalis*. The truth, however, is, that no clergyman possesses so much influence over his congregation, as he who tells them, without reserve or equivocation, to compare his sermons with the book whence he professes to draw them. This is not only, in the inferior sense of the world, honest dealing; but, in a spiritual

* Christian Observer, 1825. 231.

view, it is most honourable to the pastoral character. It has a double advantage,—it makes a clergyman watchful, lest, on the one side, he should say what he cannot support by Scripture; and, secondly, that the people, by diligently searching the record, may discover his consistency with the charter of their salvation.

When he has persuaded them to become familiar with the Bible, his work is indeed half done. Ignorance of the Divine Word is one of the foundation stones of human guilt and misery. "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." And as to men taking *religion* upon trust, the thing is quite impossible. From the lips of false prophets they may, and they do, gather delusion and flattery in large abundance; and upon this, how many venture their souls, and perish! Christianity is a system where, in a very serious sense, every man must be his own teacher; otherwise, all his knowledge will be practical ignorance. "If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!"

If an ecclesiastic of the Reformed Church discourage the laity from scrutinizing their minister's doctrine, on the absurd plea that 'the priest's lips keep knowledge'—either as an authorized interpreter of the Scriptures,

or as an expositor of the confession or articles of a given church—the very allegation exposes him to suspicion. In the Gospel there may be difficulties, embarrassing both to the wise and the unwise; but there are no secrets in the hands of a privileged class. Much of the sacred book remains to this hour a mystery; and, as if it were meant at the very outset of the volume to confound the wisdom of the wise, no satisfactory explanation has yet been given of the first ten verses of Genesis. What does the Church of Rome say to this? Has she sent a legate to our geological societies, in order to assist, in her difficulties, an infallible interpreter?

On the contrary, 'Look at Galileo on his knees; see the commentators of Newton prefixing a declaration to his immortal *Principia*, in which, by a solemn falsehood, they avoid the fate of the unhappy Florentine astronomer. "Newton," say the great mathematicians Le Seur and Jacquier, "assumes, in his third book, the hypothesis of the earth's motion. The propositions of that author could not be explained except through the same hypothesis. We have, therefore, been forced to act a character not our own. But we declare our submission to the decrees of the Roman Pontiffs

against the motion of the earth!* " ' We smile again; and again feel the superiority of the Protestant mind. Emotions, however, of an opposite kind, will agitate the bosom of a believer in the sacred writings, when he contemplates the success of Antichrist in impeding their free course through our own country; and on a principle not essentially different from the one which we have just confuted by bursts of derision.

There are, indeed, at hand various maxims and aphorisms — *distingue tempora; festina lente; cavendo tutus*—and many other antithetical mottoes, brought forward on all occasions, where men feel the power and dread the further advances of an opposing party. The best boon of Heaven to a lost world is yet to be bestowed—even among ourselves, in the asylum of truth and liberty!—with such wariness and caution, as might seem to indicate that the bread of life contained the elements of poison.

But if the country is to be delivered from its difficulties—if we would avoid the terrible conflict which may, otherwise, take place between the despotism of a certain class among us and the insubordination of other classes, the

* Blanco White's 'Evidence,' &c. Letter VI. This declaration was made so lately as 1742!

numerical force of whom it is fearful to compare with their disposition to insolence and plunder; if we would unite the Christian soldiery of all arms, without insisting upon an uniformity of accoutrements and discipline, in defence of the faith of the Christian church; if we would make our countrymen happy for this world, and strive for their eternal security in the next—oh, let all our disputes about the diffusion of the Scriptures cease, and be for ever forgotten, in a desire to bless mankind with the salvation which, as instruments in the hands of God, they describe, proclaim, and offer to universal acceptance! As long as on this point we indulge in sectarian animosities, we convert our privileges into a curse; and aid the triple conspiracy, now gathering its strength under the banners of Atheism.

CHAPTER XV.

CHARACTER OF PERTINAX—ECCLESIASTICAL BIGOTRY—THE INFIDEL ANTICHRIST.

——He is left to collect his religion as he may; the study of Christianity has formed no part of his education, and his attachment to it (where any attachment to it exists at all) is, too often, not the preference of sober reason, but merely the result of early prejudice and groundless prepossession. He was born in a Christian country, of course he is a Christian; his father was a member of the Church of England, so is he. When such is the hereditary religion, handed down from generation to generation, it cannot surprise us to observe young men of sense and spirit beginning to doubt altogether of the truth of the system in which they have been brought up, and ready to abandon a station which they are unable to defend.—Let us beware before it be too late. No one can say into what discredit Christianity may hereby grow, at a time when the free and unrestrained intercourse, subsisting among the several ranks and classes of society, so much favours the general diffusion of the sentiments of the higher orders.—WILBERFORCE.

SUCH was the portrait, and such the warning, given to his country by the great author of the 'Practical View' thirty years since. He yet survives, and has lived to see much of his

apprehensions verified. An illustration of the infidelity diffused among us shall now be attempted, in the sketch of a character—is it a very uncommon one?—where a practical disbelief of Christianity is veiled under high pretensions of attachment to ecclesiastical usages. This is one of the most insidious forms of irreligion. It is an enemy who attacks the citadel, not by open hostility, but by forming a conspiracy in the garrison itself.—It ought to be premised, that although, in the present instance, the traitor is described as belonging to an established church, yet that the same plot may be carried on, except in circumstantials, in any division of the Christian world.

Portinax was the son of parents educated under the discipline of the Established Church. Externally they were consistent members of its communion; but, gliding through life at a period when the ecclesiastical world was generally quiescent, they took little interest in the controversies occasionally awakened; and at such times gazed at what was done by others, as incurious and idle spectators. Their son passively succeeded to their principles; as he did, in after years, to their mansion and estate. In his childhood, he was regularly taught the Catechism; and, at the usual time, passed on-

ward in his religious life to the rite of Confirmation.

In those days, and in such a family, the act of Confirmation was generally regarded as little better than an *opus operatum*—as something which riveted the beneficial process of Baptism—while nothing, beyond what was merely superficial and common-place, was said as to the conduct of the catechumen since his baptism; neither with respect to the spiritual responsibilities attached to the rite next to be performed. Pertinax, therefore, went for imposition of hands, not as to a means of grace through which a Divine blessing might be communicated to sincere candidates; but as if about to undergo an undefined and mystic spell, such as might secure the aspirant from evils equally undefined and mysterious.

The routine of the family soon after introduced him within the circle of Communicants; and, at the sacramental table, the entire value of the ceremonial seemed to be comprized in a certain feeling of satisfaction, that now he had accurately complied with the requisitions of Christianity and the Church; and that a periodical repetition of the act would be a current source of merit and security.

In this course Pertinax approached the au-

tumnal season of life, and had never been sensible of any *painful* suspicion as to his fitness for eternity. He had attended the death-beds of both his parents; had seen them quietly receive the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper—much as a Catholic receives the *viaticum*—and depart in all apparent composure; but neither they nor himself had examined the evidences of their claim to everlasting happiness.

I know not how to express their views on this solemn subject more definitely than by saying, that *they looked upon their salvation as a matter of course.* There was no inquiry; there was no doubt. Their lives had not been vicious; their dispositions were amiable; their passions not vehement. The family was regular in its habits; their attendance at church and at the holy communion was ostensibly exemplary. They were able to name other families who were almost utter strangers to public worship, and also to many of the established decorums of the world.

The faith of Pertinax was hereditary, both in essence and in form. If for a moment he paused in the career of self-satisfaction under the shadows of hesitation, he recovered his progress by the recollection of his parents' lives and deaths; and especially by a cherished

remembrance of the *devotion* with which *in extremis* they offered, as he said—for he was very fond of fine words in religion—the eucharistic sacrifice. On these occasions there had been a great attendance of the household; the communion plate was brought from the parish church; and the ceremony was closed by tears, and by encomiums, on the part of the domestics, on the patrons who were leaving them.

We are not objecting to such solemnities—very far from it—but the evil was, that, from circumstances such as these, Pertinax gathered materials towards completing an edifice always in progress,—the temple of a human soul admiring its own virtues. The building was to receive its top-stone when, at the termination of life, he should close its 'well-spent hours' by a death-bed sacrament.

So rolled away forty or fifty years of his probationary state. But as he lived on to times when neither the political nor religious world were slumbering, he deserted the tranquil position occupied by his fathers, and took a decided share in the busy polemics of the day. He became a strenuous believer—not, indeed, verbally, in the infallibility of his church, but—in something which appeared to claim, without the name, yet the attributes of pontifical

sovereignty. He shewed himself, to all other divisions of the Protestant community, exactly in the attitude which a rigid Romanist assumes towards the Church of England.

Under the keenest feelings of exasperation, excited by hearing a neighbouring Roman Catholic gentleman pronounce our Establishment to be a church without an altar and without a priesthood, excluded from the privileges of the covenant of God, and abandoned to a desperate reliance on some extraordinary exertion of Divine mercy; he yet told precisely the same tale, point by point, to a Dissenting minister, who made incursions into his vicinity; denouncing *him* and *his* party as a church without an altar, without a priesthood, without a regular claim to salvation, and altogether according to the technical phraseology previously employed against himself.

Yet no one frowned upon the Papal system with darker hostility. It was observable also, that, in proportion as he declaimed against Popery, he seemed eager to approximate the ceremonials of his own church, even to its decorations, to those of that community; and this in direct opposition to the opinions of his venerable, orthodox, and old-fashioned rector; who had much to say in self-defence, about the

relics of Popery, the simplicity of the Reformers, and the strange inconsistency of a layman disputing the authority of his own appointed spiritual guide.

If the question should be asked, Where was the specific, definite difference between Pertinax and his Catholic neighbour who unchurched the hierarchy of these dominions, no sagacity of mine can contribute a satisfactory answer. I can tell where they met, but not where they separated.

They both defended outward and visible signs, without any serious reference to an inward and spiritual grace. Their signs varied in conformation, but not in intrinsic value. The symbolic bread of the national church was, to Pertinax, as darkly mysterious and efficient, as the wafer alleged to veil the Real Presence. The Liturgy was his Missal; and, beyond the attachment justly due to devout men of whatever church, the prelates and clergy of England were his conclave; although, among these, he had his peculiarly orthodox favourites, as distinguished from all enthusiasts. He composed an essay on the Divine Right of Episcopacy; and was told, in booksellers' shops and drawing-rooms, that he had set the question at rest for ever. He drew up a second essay, in reply

to the Charge of his own diocesan; accusing him of disturbing the peace of the church by novel and pernicious principles. The real crime of the accused was, that he fulfilled the duties and lived the life of a Christian bishop, according to his consecration vows; and in this manner awakened the Antinomian principles of the complainant, who could abuse even a prelate, when he sustained the spiritual character of his office. At such a moment there was an entire oblivion of the *jus divinum* *.

* Controversial writers are fond of telling how Bishop Hall was abused by certain of the Puritans; but how was he treated by the ecclesiastics of his day, and by some of his own clergy? He writes, 'I entered upon that place (Exeter) not without much prejudice and suspicion on some hands; for some, that sat at the stern of the church, had me in great jealousy for too much favour of Puritanism. I soon had intelligence who were set over me for espials; my ways were curiously observed and scanned. Some persons of note in the clergy, being guilty of their own negligence and disorderly courses, and finding me ever ready to encourage those whom I found conscionably forward, and painful in their places, and willingly giving way to orthodox and peaceable lectures in several parts of my diocese, opened their mouths against me, both obliquely in the pulpit, and directly at the court; complaining of my too much indulgence to persons disaffected, and my too much liberty of frequent lecturings within my charge. The billows went so high, that I was three several times upon my knee to his Majesty, to answer these great criminations. What messages of caution I had from some of my wary brethren, and what expostulatory letters I had from above, I need not relate. Sure I am, I had peace and comfort at home.'—*Shaking of the Olive Tree.* 41—43. Prelates of Bishop Hall's spirit and activity

But Pertinax assimilated every thing, consciously or unconsciously, to the Papacy. In the Canons, Articles, and Homilies, and especially in the first of these—for, in sooth, of the other two he knew little but the name—he found his Tridentine decrees. He seemed, except in the moment of heated controversy, to be quite ignorant of the existence of other divisions of the Reformation; and supposed that his own communion were in exclusive possession of all theological erudition, and the sole depositaries of pulpit eloquence.

All the while he slumbered on, almost entirely regardless of the simplest doctrines, and certainly of the practical influence, of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He was, it is true, aware of the advent and birth of the Messiah, because the institutions of his country brought these events to annual remembrance. He observed, with outward strictness, the periods of the ecclesiastical year; and was not a little irritated if his rector neglected to deliver discourses appropriate to them.

It was at once pleasant and painful to watch the skill with which, at the same time, he unspiritualized the subjects in question; and

must expect the same treatment. But see Matthew v. 11, 12; and Philippians i. 28—30.

celebrated the festivals of the Christian world, with little apparent consciousness of their origin. The Epiphany, for example, brought to him no grateful sensation, that among *us* Gentiles were preached 'the unsearchable riches of Christ.' Passion-week, in his estimation, was the most important period of the year. But the topic uppermost in his mind was a consideration of the actual Passion, the personal sufferings of Jesus Christ, without any corresponding reference—beyond a vague, heartless recognition—to their cause in human guilt, and especially his own guilt, and their consequences in the salvation of believers. He was affected, sometimes to tears, by a detail of the events in Gethsemane and on Calvary; but, practically, he went no farther. The crucifixion was contemplated by him very much as the performance of a tragedy, with the mournfulness and the sceneries of a painful death*. Easter was

* 'The system of Socinus,' says the Rev. Robert Hall, 'is a cold negation; the whole secret of it consists in thinking meanly of Christ. If it is calculated to relieve the conscience of a weight, which the principles of orthodoxy render it difficult to shake off, without complying with the conditions of the Gospel, Infidelity answers the same purpose still better, and possesses a still higher degree of simplicity—meaning by that term, what Socinians generally mean, the total absence of mystery.' According, however, to the religious system exemplified in the text, a ceremonious observer of Passion-week no more regards the

a season of unintelligible triumph, but not of spiritual gratitude.

To add one example more of *nominal* churchmanship: Trinity Sunday had a large share of impressiveness; but Pertinax held the Athanasian doctrine only as a series of metaphysical positions, sanctioned by ecclesiastical power; connected also with what *he* most admired and cherished—namely, a denunciation of error and heresy, opposed to the sectarianism of Arius and Socinus—and forming a line of demarcation between orthodoxy and the corruptions of

death of Christ than the Socinian. Nay, the actual denier of the Atonement is far more consistent than the man who pleads for it, but who never felt its value. In the latter instance is incurred the guilt of a hypocrite, to whom might be addressed, "Betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?" A traitor of this class, if a Romanist, bows to the crucifix, but derides the doctrine of the cross: if a Protestant, he keeps Good Friday with great strictness, but this is the extent of the homage he pays to the Redeemer. In both cases, the individual's religion is a *cold negation*, consisting in *thinking meanly of Christ*. There is here also a *total absence of mystery*—of the spiritual, vivific influence of the Gospel; as of a scheme of salvation, most welcome to souls awakened from the dreams of self-righteousness and ritual purification to a knowledge of 'the powers of the world to come.' The Socinian system has been long called the frigid zone of Christianity; but the disciple of Athanasius, who *thus thinks* of the Trinity and the Atonement, and goes no farther, remains in the same icy region—his opinions 'fixed as in a frost'—where the sun may shine, but with no perceptible warmth; where much is seen, but nothing flourishes. What fatal mistakes arise, from mistaking a certain theological correctness of sentiment for religious principle!

Christianity. Still, there was no serious reference to the agency of the three Divine Persons in the work of human redemption; no personal desire to obtain and enjoy the Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God, and the Communion of the Holy Ghost.

Yet was there an ample space of neutral ground, where Pertinax cordially shook hands with the practical irreligionist, whether Catholic, Arian, or Socinian. Differing as they might in other respects, they were firmly united in pursuing with avidity the things of this world. They severally returned from the church, the chapel, or the meeting, to the central point of pleasure and profit; from which, for a moment only, they diverged, when public worship or party doctrines demanded their retreat from the direct pursuit of avarice and vanity. They seldom, indeed, met on the first day of the week.—On a certain Sunday afternoon, however, Pertinax had an unexpected rencontre with a neighbouring Romanist, whom he asked to go with him for once to the church; particularly to see a fine Rubens, which he had just placed over the communion table. 'No, sir,' said the other: 'as Dr. Johnson declared that he would not sanction a Presbyterian assembly by his presence, neither will

I, by my attendance, give one hour's support to a church which has lost the succession, and which persists in maintaining the shadow of sacraments she never had authority to administer.' No words can describe the indignation occasioned by this repulse. By Pertinax the evening was spent in sullenness, and muttering to himself; the cause of which he angrily refused to explain. The Popish recusant, on his part, idled away the close of the same Sabbath with his priest and usual associates; describing, with extravagant elation, the discomfiture of Pertinax, and the triumph of the true church.

But religionists such as these soon find their way back to the neutral territory of this present world. If they quarrelled on the Sunday, yet at the next morning's assemblage to expedite the concerns of an enclosure, a canal, or a mine—of course there was nothing wrong in the engagement itself; we speak only of the spirit of the individual—and also at the evening party and ball, there was a perfect identity of feeling. On the race-course and in the chace, all *religious* discussion was merged in the pleasurable sensations of the hour. If they did not cement their union by an attendance at the gambling-table or the cock-pit, they did

not abstain on purely Christian principles. The occupation did not suit their taste; or was too low, too gross, for *their* department of the world. No question was asked, how it stood with regard to the Divine law.

Now, what does this tale unfold, but that such men were unbelievers in masquerade; whether concealing their Antichristianity under the visor of Catholicism, or dressed in the various costumes of the Reformation? They never contemplated the Gospel in the abstract; or considered forms of ecclesiastical polity valuable, only in proportion as they bring men personally acquainted with the religion of Jesus Christ.

Pertinax was not aware that the majority of mankind, and himself among the rest, were *nihilists*,—indifferent to every thing, except to the secularities and perversions superinduced upon the Gospel by human contrivance. Such is the Papal system—such the religion of the Reformation—as frequently exhibited, by the adherents of either scheme, to the gaze and compassion of a genuine Christian.

Will the reader be startled at the re-appearance, on our present ground, of the Infidel Antichrist? Is this same Pertinax to be detected in the front rank of unbelievers, "aliens

from the covenant of promise, and without God in the world?" We can only answer, that his pretence to religion is the most melancholy feature of his character. He might be acting a more honourable part, if he deserted the Church and circulated the Age of Reason: he would possibly, at the same time, be acting a less injurious one. He is one of those partisans who remind us of the couplet of Swift, so much admired by Dr. Johnson:

> 'Some dire misfortune to portend
> No enemy can match a friend *.'

We may well apply the spirit of the sentiment to a man who, under the robes of Christianity, hides the stiletto of an assassin; who says to his confederates, "Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he; hold him fast!"

The infidels of the present times are calculating upon the assistance they already have, and expect to have, from the false friends of the faith of Christ. Let the Gospel be degraded into names and usages, and this is exactly what Voltaire, Condorcet, Rousseau, and their allies, wished to find, and did find. Our

* 'Verses on his own Death;' founded on a maxim of Rochefoucald.

own domestic foes (of whom the above character is an example) may differ from the Continental infidels, among other points, in this: the former lower Christianity to their own purposes, and then defend a system so debased, as though it were the original; the latter look to such defenders as auxiliaries, and discover 'that no enemy can match a friend.'

The formalists of the world are, indeed, too *cold* to be strictly compared to one of the Asiatic churches; although to each of those formalists might be addressed part, at least, of what the Spirit said to the Laodicean, "Thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." They are ignorant of God, and of themselves. To know that we know nothing, is no inconsiderable advance towards true wisdom. It is something to suspect our blindness. But Antichristians of all classes—and here the nominalists of orthodoxy and heresy are exactly on the same level—assume their knowledge, however crude and scanty, to be principle. They have the paper and print of the Bible, or of their own selected theology, and suppose themselves rich. 'It is

the *possession* of a revelation,' says a Christian philosopher*, 'not the *use*, which these men are accustomed to contemplate and to value. As a miser conceives himself rich by the treasure which he never employs, so the persons to whom we allude suppose themselves enlightened by a book from which they profess to derive no information, and saved by a religion which is allowed to engage little or none of their attention. Such a system presents a neutral ground, on which professed Christians and infidels may meet, and proceed to assail with their joint force the substantial truth of our religion. There is nothing in such views of Christianity to appal the infidel; nothing to mortify the pride, nothing to check or controul the exorbitances, of the *carnal mind*, which is *enmity against God*. In stripping the religion of Christ of all that is spiritual, it renders it weak and inefficacious as an instrument of renovating the mind; and by fostering its pride, and sparing its corruption, prepares it for shaking off the restraints of religion altogether.'

Hence is formed the alliance, in these critical times, between outside Christians and the avowed enemies of Christianity. It is the

* Rev. Robert Hall.

common cause of a wicked world. When bad men combine against the spiritual kingdom of Jesus Christ, they are not delicate in the choice of allies: what they chiefly want in such confederates, is unity of purpose. Their object is single; and no instrument of Antichrist is found to be so feeble, but what it may do something towards the disgrace of the Gospel. It would be a thing quite incredible, had we not frequently witnessed it, that men of talent, education, and rank, should discover as much imbecility, ignorance, and rudeness, when they speak and act against pure Christianity, as is shewn by their inferiors. The illiterate and the vulgar rise, for a moment, to an equality with the highest order of society. Impiety indeed, like death, is a leveller of all distinctions; and, like the same last enemy, plunges the soul into forgetfulness of God: "For in death no man remembereth Thee!"

It is further observable, that when men of the world laugh at the doctrines and pageantry of Popery, there seems to be no malignity, or sense of personal injury, mixed up with their derision. It is what themselves would call a good-natured laugh at nonsense and mummery; and they pass on to the next object which attracts them. But when their ridicule is excited against

a genuine Christian, the feeling is evidently of a distinct kind. It is no longer an amusement; but a hostile emotion, an angry sneer, disgust, and hatred. "Saul was afraid of David, because the Lord was with him, and was departed from Saul; and David behaved himself wisely in all his ways. And Saul was yet the more afraid of David; and Saul became David's enemy continually."

How little do Pertinax and his party suspect, while they busy themselves in collecting signatures to petitions against the admission of their supposed opponents to power, that the Infidel Antichrist is standing upon his watch-tower; and anticipating the day when the powers of the Papacy and of the Reformation shall join forces, in a conflict with their common enemy! The contest is, indeed, already begun; and if ever the Roman Catholic system should regain its ascendancy among us, there needs no spirit of prophecy to predict the reunion of irreligious Protestants with their now ostensible rivals.

A writer *, whom I am happy once more to cite in evidence of the opinions advanced in these pages, makes the following impressive

* See the foregoing note.

statement:—'The present times are eminently distinguished by the efforts employed for the extension of vital religion: each denomination has taken its station and contributed its part toward the diffusion of Evangelical sentiments. The consequence has been, that the professors of serious piety are multiplied, and form at present a very conspicuous part of the community. The space which they occupy in the minds of the public is not merely proportioned to their numerical importance, still less to their rank in society: it is in a great measure derived from the publicity of their proceedings, and the numerous associations for the promotion of pious and benevolent objects which they have originated and supported. By these means, their discriminating doctrines, essential to vital piety, have become better known and more fully discussed than heretofore.—One consequence, which might have been expected, has been the result. The opposition of the enemies of religion has become more virulent; their hatred more heated and inflamed; and they have turned with no small complacency to the contemplation of a system which forms a striking contrast to the object of their detestation. Popery, in the ordinary state of its profession, combines the form of godliness with

a total denial of its power. A heap of unmeaning ceremonies, adapted to fascinate the imagination and engage the senses; implicit faith in human authority, combined with an utter neglect of Divine teaching; ignorance the most profound, joined to dogmatism the most presumptuous; a vigilant exclusion of Biblical knowledge, together with a total extinction of free inquiry; present the spectacle of religion lying in state, surrounded with all the silent pomp of death. The very absurdities of such a religion render it less unacceptable to men whose decided hostility to truth inclines them to view with complacency whatever obscures its beauty or impedes its operation. Of all the corruptions of Christianity, Popery presents the most numerous points of contrast to the simple doctrines of the Gospel. On these accounts, supposing that Popery were triumphant, we have the utmost confidence that the professors of evangelical piety would be its first victims. *The party most opposed to them look to Papists as their natural ally*, on whose assisttance, in the suppression of what they are pleased to denominate enthusiasm, they may always depend.'

CHAPTER XVI.

ANTICHRIST IN THE RELIGIOUS WORLD—SUGGESTIONS TO REAL CHRISTIANS.

I less admire gifts of utterance and bare profession of religion than I once did; and have much more charity for many who, by want of gifts, do make an obscurer profession than they. I once thought, that almost all that could pray movingly and fluently, and talk well of religion, had been saints. But experience hath opened to me, what odious crimes may consist with high profession: and I have met with divers obscure persons, not noted for any extraordinary profession or forwardness in religion, but only to live a quiet blameless life, whom I have afterwards found to have long lived, as far as I could discern, a truly godly and sanctified life; only their prayers and duties were by accident kept secret from other men's observation. Yet he that upon this pretence would confound the godly and the ungodly, may as well go about to lay heaven and hell together.

BAXTER.

Is there, then, no calm retirement from the strifes of the visible church—no sacred spot uncontaminated by its pollutions—no holy of holies within the veil of the present Temple, where the servants of God are privileged to assemble without fear of the world's intrusion? No;

there is none! and no such retreat is either to be looked for or desired. Not *desired*, because it appears to be a necessary part of the economy of grace that the wheat and the tares should grow together until the harvest.

Besides, could a place of security be discovered whence the world, as such, should be excluded, the children of the kingdom would be conscious of carrying thither *themselves*—their own imperfections, and remaining spots, and blemishes—and also, of finding among their companions similar indications of human infirmity. The spirits of the just would not *here* be made perfect, even if an apostle or an archangel became the ruler and guide of their society. How soon might it be dissolved by some strange misconception, or jealousy; and which would furnish the impatient crowd in the outward courts with a new and welcome triumph!

A fresh entrance into the religious world has been opened, of late years, for Antichrist, by our religious institutions, at once the glory and the shame—but in very different degrees—of the present times. We only advert to them now, as providing a wide extent of neutral ground, where the borderers on both sides may

meet each other with smiles, and interchange bows and compliments. The consequences have been, not merely dissipation and display under the shadow of Christianity, but a spurious and debased religion, which has deluded its professors with the notion that they may follow Christ without taking up the cross. This is no new heresy; it was among the defilements of the primitive church—one form of the antinomianism prevalent in the Apostolic age. Of this heresy, Ananias and Sapphira might be termed the founders: they were allured, by the apparent popularity of the new religion, to attach themselves to its cause. The Gospel seemed to open a path to credit: the narrow way looked wider; and though these speculators might know that Jesus Christ was himself despised and rejected of men, yet things, as they imagined, began to brighten, and the offence of the cross appeared to be less formidable.

So has it frequently been from the first to the present century. Men are always contriving to make the kingdom of God come "with observation." But had our popular institutions never been called into being, the religious world would still have exhibited the deformity inseparable from the symmetries of the most perfect

human society *. No precaution, on the part either of pastors or people, can possibly prevent the invasions of Antichrist — that intrusive, and, if we may so speak, omnipresent spirit. The first teachers of the church of Christ foresaw the disgrace which would attend its progress along the stream of time, till it should reach eternity; and, as they gazed on the pain-

* 'I say Amen,' writes Cowper, 'with all my heart, to your observation on religious characters. Men who profess themselves adepts in mathematical knowledge, in astronomy, or jurisprudence, are generally as well qualified as they would appear. The reason may be, that they are always liable to detection, should they attempt to impose upon mankind, and therefore take care to be what they pretend. In religion alone, a profession is often slightly taken up and slovenly carried on; because, forsooth, candour and charity require us to hope the best; and because it is easy to deceive the ignorant, who are a great majority, upon this subject. Let a man attach himself to a particular party, contend furiously for what are properly called Evangelical doctrines, and enlist himself under the banner of some popular preacher, and the business is done. Behold a Christian! a saint! a phœnix! In the mean time, perhaps, his heart, and his temper, and even his conduct, are unsanctified; possibly less exemplary than those of some avowed infidels. No matter: he can talk; he has the Shibboleth of the true church; the Bible in his pocket; and a head well stored with notions. But the quiet, humble, modest, and peaceable person—who is in his practice what the other is only in his profession; who hates a noise, and therefore makes none; who, knowing the snares that are in the world, keeps himself as much out of it as he can, and never enters it but when duty calls, and even then with fear and trembling—is the Christian that will always stand highest in the estimation of those who bring all characters to the test of true wisdom, and judge of the tree by its fruit.'—*Letter to the Rev. William Unwin; March* 1782.

ful vision, were anxious to warn the faithful to keep themselves pure. When St. Peter was restored from the shame of his fall, he strengthened his brethren, by beseeching them, "as strangers and pilgrims, to abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; having," he adds, "your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that whereas they speak against you as evil-doers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation. For so is the will of God, that with well-doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men; having a good conscience; that they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ." Now these things are doubtless written for *our* instruction, upon whom the ends of the world are come!

A really consistent life will either stop the mouths of bad men; or they will secretly avow themselves to be false accusers: so that, if they are not silenced, their consciences will bear witness to their treachery. The great offence of real Christians, in the eye of the world, is their religion—not a pretence to it. Men do not quarrel with their fellows for being selfish, ambitious, vain, scoffers, despisers of the Gospel, neglecters of the Scripture, and careless in devotion. *These* are not the things which

awaken general contempt—the actual cause is practical holiness.

To say, however, of all professors of pure Christianity, that such characters are invariably consistent, is not true. In all ages the cause of God has been more injured by false friends, and by imperfect characters, than it has ever been hurt by declared enemies. David, for instance, brought more shame upon religion by his foul transgressions, than Herod did when he openly persecuted the first Christians. In the one case, the King of Israel darkened with disgrace the hierarchy of the chosen people, and made the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme: in the other, Herod only added some fresh soldiers to the noble army of martyrs. But of all the forms of hostility, that of a hollow friendship is the worst. The Son of God said to one of his selected disciples, "It was not an open enemy that hath done me this dishonour, for then I could have borne it; but it was even thou, my companion, and my own familiar friend:"...."I speak not of you all; I know whom I have chosen: but, that the Scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me."

Such things very seriously illustrate the obligation imposed upon all those who aspire to

the name and privileges of believers, to look well to their consistency. Jesus Christ said to his primitive followers, "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake." It is yet observable, that he, as it were, guards this beatitude; by marking out, that it is only opposition *for his sake* which draws after it a blessing. Accordingly, if a Christian acts inconsistently with his profession, or even does something which has needlessly a bad appearance about it, then, if the surrounding world begin to clamour against him, let him not talk of persecution; but let him voluntarily descend into the valley of humiliation, and confess, 'I have done this, not because of my religion, but because, so far at least, my profession was insincere: I have, to this extent, acted the hypocrite's part, and I merit the hypocrite's punishment.'

There are, indeed, those who are too much disposed to hide, if not to justify, the faults of good men. But their policy is not countenanced by the Scriptures. The inspired book records the truth, whether against Christians or for them. If one Apostle denies his Lord with imprecations; if another betrays him for money; if all forsake him in the moment of

danger; all this is told without a single effort towards extenuation. But, on the other hand, observe also this: if the Scriptures state the sins of the servants of God, they *also* describe their repentance and their punishment. In the mean time, religion is none the worse in itself for the inconsistency of its adherents. It may be clouded for a moment, but will again shine with its former refulgence. Therefore a sound believer will say, 'Do not lay the burden of any suspicious conduct of mine on the Gospel: my guilt is all my own; and the religion I have disgraced will soon vindicate itself against the world's hostility.'

The native feebleness and insufficiency even of such as 'walk high in salvation,' should cause them to be the more vigilant. Indeed, they strive to do this; and the very effort is an evidence of their spiritual superiority. The world, it is true, cannot see their hearts, but it can mark and scan their conduct. It is very quick-sighted in watching the behaviour of any individual who either is, or professes to be, something beyond a formalist. If he make a slip, a thousand eyes will observe it, and a thousand tongues report it abroad. Then, let it be your aim—we dare not say, to defy the world to find fault; for if you do this, you will

be tracing a dangerous path—no; that be far from you! but endeavour to prove to others that your religion is no scheme of splendid pretensions. It was said of some of the primitive age, that their coevals "took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus." Let the world now be conscious of a like conformity on your part to the spirit of the same Saviour, and of your communion with him in all things pertaining to godliness.

If you would do honour to the everlasting Gospel, let it be seen that there is something in real religion far beyond what is called the integrity, generosity, and liberality of the world. Let us not—but ever in entire dependence upon the Spirit of Christ, as sought for in prayer, and all the means of grace—allow ourselves to be beguiled into any conduct which bears, even upon its surface, the characters of evil. A good man ought not to be suspected. The formalist, and also the undisguised libertine, should equally be convinced by his example, that he has followed no "cunningly devised fable." They should be compelled to feel that genuine Christians act by a higher rule than themselves; and be led to confess, as in the case of Daniel, "we shall not find any occasion against this man, except we

find it against him concerning the law of his God."

But let no one, who has ostensibly taken the Christian side, imagine himself to be exempted from the danger of disgracing the name and cause of his Redeemer. No man can possibly answer for himself; and the records even of the mystical church are miserably polluted by accounts of the falls of some who once seemed to be steadily keeping the narrow way leading to the kingdom. "Be not high-minded, but fear." "*For so is the will of God,* that with well-doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men." It is, consequently, not because it might be a matter of mere human prudence, or because it would support the credit of any party to which a Christian might belong—this would be nothing more honourable than the artifice of a mere politician—on the contrary, it is *the will of God:* and happy they who, in the present relation, study to know that will, and to perform with all fidelity!

It is our wisdom, indeed, to set the standard of our profession high. '"Drink deep, or taste not," is a direction,' says an author, who described his own experience, 'full as applicable to religion, if we would find it a source

of pleasure, as it is to knowledge. A little religion is, it must be confessed, apt to make men gloomy; as a little knowledge to render them vain. Hence the unjust imputation often brought upon religion by those whose degree of religion is just sufficient, by condemning their course of conduct, to render them uneasy; enough merely to impair the sweetness of the pleasures of sin, and not enough to compensate for the relinquishment of them by its own peculiar comforts. Thus these men bring up, as it were, an ill report of that land of promise, which, in truth, abounds with whatever in our journey through life can best refresh and strengthen us *.'

In reverting, at this point, to the more controversial parts of this volume, it may be remarked, that a Protestant who enters into debate with his opponents, in order to erect upon the ruin of their heresies a number of sound opinions, and contents himself, at the close, with the conviction—and we will allow the conviction to be real—of his having been successful, has gained nothing beyond the barren triumph of a casuist. By such an issue religion is not become in the least more valu-

* Wilberforce's Practical View, chap. vii. § 1.

able to him. The controversy was not the evidence of his sincerity; neither could its result be the pledge of any consolation. He stands where he stood before. He has defeated an antagonist, but not subdued himself; as there is a wide difference between a man who proudly advocates the Christian cause, and one who yields it a practical submission. Therefore religion is nothing, if it be not a personal possession. "The kingdom of God is within you"—an internal, active principle.

They whose adherence to the Reformation is matured into a spiritual character, uphold their system of belief as absolutely essential to their peace and consolation. They do not dispute about the bread of life as though they were examining an abstract theory of nutrition; but as being unable to live without the Divine nourishment itself. With them, the Gospel is no more a point of controversy, than a remedy is to a sick man, who by its application has been effectually cured. In either case, speculation has been forgotten in reality. In more direct terms: a sinner awakened from the dreams of self-righteousness, and from a visionary search after happiness in worldly things, feels that he needs forgiveness and sanctification; and, that without these Divine gifts, he

must perish everlastingly. He is alarmed, and wants a shelter from impending wrath; he is miserable, and cannot purchase felicity. "Oh, wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death!" To a spirit thus wounded, nothing can bring relief but the hope of salvation through Jesus Christ—not an ability to confute the tenets of an opponent.

But how strange does this view of practical Christianity appear in the eyes of the world! He, however, "who is spiritual, judgeth all things; yet he himself is judged of no man." He knows far more of the rest of mankind, than they know of him. He looks far deeper into the opinions, manners, and ways of the world, than the subject of his penetration at all suspects. Mankind are by no means such a mystery to him, as he is to surrounding observers. A believer of the ancient church said, "I am become a wonder unto many." Such is the case, in every age, in the instance of of any one who does not trifle with religion, but is earnest in his pursuit after true happiness; determined, by grace, to "lay hold on eternal life;" and thus becoming cause of surprise to the libertine and the formalist. He is not understood. No man, remaining in

nature's darkness, can enter into his character; can comprehend his ultimate end, his motives, plans, and course of conduct. One painful proof of this is perpetually discernible, in the endeavours of bad men to lower the character of real Christians, by putting upon their actions an unkind and cruel construction. Frequently do the good deny themselves, and injure their personal interest, by their benevolence to others; and all they gain in return is, not seldom, the abuse and contumely of the persons whom they wished to benefit. This is one of the many causes operating in these days to the discouragement of the servants of God, in their struggles with the ingratitude of mankind. They feel that their adorable Master's warning has not become obsolete, "In the world ye shall have tribulation:" yet, when under the immediate influence of the weariness and disappointment so often resulting from their attempts to win souls, they almost forget, or question the reality of his assurance, "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

We are constantly talking about our missionary projects, and arranging their concerns, as though these foreign objects alone demanded

our attention. But the principal effort of Christian duty should be connected with our domestic missions. Little does that minister of religion know of the state of our own country, which we fondly eulogize as "the glory of all lands," and the "salt of the earth," who does not feel that he himself has to combat, at home, with the same powers of darkness which, according to the representations of our Reports, are so successfully opposed by our emissaries among the Heathen. "A man's foes shall be," and are, "those of his own house"—of his own church, of his own cherished country. To such as have not known this by bitter experience, we despair of bringing conviction of a truth discoverable only by personal knowledge; but to such as no longer doubt its reality, we would offer our sympathy, as having been ourselves wounded in the house of a friend; and conscious that we may expect, rather the increase of hostile feeling and resentment, than any abatement of enmity, in the present aspect of the visible church. Let it, at the same time, never escape the recollection of those who understand this statement, that, in a subordinate sense, the credit of religion is committed to their custody. If it be

stained by disgrace, let it be their earnest desire to be preserved from contributing to a dishonour so lamentable; that, when offences come, they may avoid the woe which will inevitably overtake the guilty.

CHAPTER XVII.

CONCLUSION.

Our sins, if we amend not, will enfeeble and divide us yet more: our intestine foes may take new courage; our foreign ones may support them better. Hitherto we have been only washed by the waves; the next time we may sink under them. Or suppose a sinful nation, either by stopping short of the extremity of sin, or by an uncommon delay of Divine justice, were to escape temporal ruin ever so long; yet there will a worse, an infinitely worse thing, come without fail, and that very soon, to every sinner in it,—the final vengeance of God in the next life: which will be peculiarly severe on those who despise the riches of his forbearance and long-suffering, and will not know that his goodness leads them to repentance.—SECKER.

THEY who write on controversial subjects usually embark upon a sea of troubles; and it is well if they escape capture or shipwreck. But, in one sense, all religious instruction partakes of the nature of controversy. Every faithful sermon is a remonstrance; an attack upon human prejudice and passion: and he who delivers it will, sooner or later, be conscious of the enemy's resistance. Men will not

long endure reproof; and especially when it holds up a mirror, where they discover the reflection of their own antinomian and self-righteous pretensions. The Christian patriots of the times have, in many instances, accused themselves, and most justly, of shunning "the offence of the Cross"—it is a scriptural phrase, and applicable to the militant state of the church, throughout all its progress to eternity—by making too large concessions to their adversaries. The plan has not succeeded; since bad men will never be disarmed by the blandishments of flattery; and "the friendship of the world is" still "enmity with God."

Hitherto the vials of Divine wrath have not been poured upon this guilty nation. But we may remind ourselves of certain of old, to whom, in reference to the massacre of the Galileans, and the fall of the tower in Siloam, Jesus said, "Suppose ye that these were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered these things? Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." The informants, who brought intelligence of Pilate's deed, seem to have intimated, that such as had fallen

were offenders unusually criminal; otherwise God would not have singled them out for punishment. But Jesus taught them a different lesson. He told them not to judge men by an incidental calamity having overtaken them; as if the good always escaped and the wicked perished. He gave them to understand, that, though some transgressors might be slain by the sword of Pilate, and others crushed by the fall of a building, yet that such surprisals were no proof of extraordinary guilt. Neither was this the only occasion when Jesus set right the mistakes of mankind on such points; since, at another time, his disciples asked him concerning a man blind from his birth, "Master, who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" The reply was, "Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents"—that is, beyond the common extent of human depravity.

Without presuming to measure the degree of iniquity which we have nationally attained, we may yet hear the Son of God saying to us, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." But the threatening casts a deep shadow over worldly prospects. We are more ready to cry out, "Art thou come to torment us before the time?" than to say, "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on us." Or, we would

shelter ourselves from the impending storm by pleading the purity of the faith inherited from our forefathers; and our attachment to it, as distinct from the perversions of the rival church. This very plea is one of our worst delusions. We defend ourselves in the aggregate; and talk of the public religion as if a national confession ensured individual safety. Our plea is not personal: if it were, we should cease to expect the continuance of Divine protection, further than as we, each for himself, were able to appropriate the blessings of the Gospel. A faithful disciple aspires to say, "*My* Lord, and *my* God;" and to do this, as obtaining the earnest of eternal redemption immediately from Jesus Christ, the Head of the universal church. Any other kind of religion is vague and inefficient—received without examination, and possessed without any definable benefit. It may seem, as it were, faintly to glimmer through the spiritual gloom of life on the Sabbath, but it is eclipsed during the week. Men of the world are shrewd enough to observe this periodical appearance; while Antichrist, on his part, persuades them to be satisfied with a good which at the same time they deride as visionary.

While the majority of our countrymen care

for none of these things, it is agreed on all sides that the empire is in a state of considerable embarrassment. Within and without the walls of Parliament our statesmen and political economists are proposing all kinds of remedies, or palliations, for the distempers extending around them. Some of these have their degree of utility; and others may aggravate the disease. The most efficacious of them, however, promise but little, in the estimate of a Christian; and it is too late, when we survey the progress of society, to have recourse to any measures which will not bear scrutiny, or generally coincide with popular opinion.

We have been told, by high authority, that Christianity is part and parcel of the law of the land. If so, it is time that the value of this portion of our inheritance should be better known and appreciated. There are those among us who are selling, or have long since sold, their birth-right, in the very spirit of Esau; and obtained nothing better in return than his morsel of meat. "But what shall a man be profited, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" It is the most serious question ever addressed to mankind;—a question, also, which admits only of one answer, yet almost vs given with unwillingness and shame.

Let any one, professing to love his country, make this appeal to himself, and watch the movements of his conscience in preparing the reply. If the prevailing emotion be that of irritation and surprise, he is yet in the dark as to the real difficulties of the times, and equally ignorant of the means of removing them. On the other hand, if the inquiry awaken — or rather continue in exercise—feelings tending to solemnize and subdue his mind, and to excite

'The thoughts which wander through eternity,'

he will quickly discover, that our national peril arises from our guilt in the sight of God; and that no escape can possibly be found except in Jesus Christ, and him crucified. Such will be his decided opinion in the retirement of his closet; and he would disclose it in his social intercourse, both with men of his own character and with the common enemy. But, with the latter, what would be his reward? and what a coward does he find himself, when he ought to cry out, "Who is on the Lord's side? who?"

The promise of Jesus Christ to his church, that "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it," will, indeed, never, never be broken. The church—meaning his mystical body, as separate

from all nominal members—may yet have to struggle, in these last times, against some extraordinary aggression of its enemies. The attack will be all the more fearful, if it be made, not with the weapons of violence, but of allurement. Such was an early policy, as described by Milton, in the councils of darkness; when one of its princes proposed to glut his revenge against the Creator of man, by contriving the loss of Paradise and the ruin of its new inhabitants:—

'Some advantageous act may be achiev'd.—
Seduce them to our party, that their God
May prove their foe; and with repenting hand
Abolish his own works. This would surpass
Common revenge; and interrupt his joy
In our confusion; when his darling sons,
Hurl'd headlong to partake with us, shall curse
Their frail original, and faded bliss—
Faded so soon *.'

The dire success of this policy has been ever since attested by the convulsive sighs and groans of all creation: "The creature was made subject unto vanity." But we must apply these things to ourselves and our country. Let not the urgency of business, whether in

* Paradise Lost, book ii.

the legislature or in our private departments, thrust from us the remembrance that we have souls, either to be saved or lost; and that the present life *is*—what we all agree to call it—a transitory scene, yet the beginning of an eternal existence. The truths most familiar with us, and exciting no controversy, are usually the most disregarded. How few live from hour to hour as creatures born to die; as believers in the immortality of the soul, and in a state of future retribution! If we sincerely gave credit to these elementary principles, we should pass onward to what is revealed and offered to us in the Gospel. As it is, the faith of our Christian community is not to be distinguished from a listless and irrational assent.

Even in the more select circles of religionists —for such is the modern appellation, invented, as it would seem, to describe the dubious characters of the age—amidst much knowledge, and much exertion in behalf of our popular institutions, what inconsistencies of spirit and conduct are exposed to the gaze of an infidel world! what union with the hostile party! what compliances with their manners! what dread of their censures! what anxiety to soften their prejudices! what manœuvring to reconcile the conscience to plausible sin! All the while

the progress of SALVATION — not of opinion and correct theories—seems to be suspended or terminated.

In drawing his work to this its gloomy close, the author entreats his readers to consider him, if as an accuser and an alarmist, yet also as a confessor, pleading guilty to charges preferred against others. His skill or his ignorance, as affecting to be a spiritual physician, in the present instance, may be discovered by such of his brethren as have longest and most successfully practised in the vast infirmary of this world—every division of it affording much the same examples of human derangement and misery. To them he appeals for the correction or confirmation of this extensive and diversified report. As far as its details coincide with their own experience, *ament meminisse periti*—though the recollection is still distressing. On a contrary supposition, they may be induced to sympathize with one who has committed, as he trusts, no intentional mistake; and as being themselves exposed to the confusions of error, so long as, among the intricacies of life's wilderness, they wind their way to eternity. The path is dark and narrow; and although, of all who travel it, a faithful Minister of the Gospel

should be most happy; yet, as our own Herbert says, 'He is generally sad, because he knows nothing but the cross of Christ; his mind being defixed on it with those nails wherewith his Master was: or if he have any leisure to look off from thence, he meets continually with two most sad spectacles,—sin and misery; God dishonoured every day, and man afflicted.'

FINIS.

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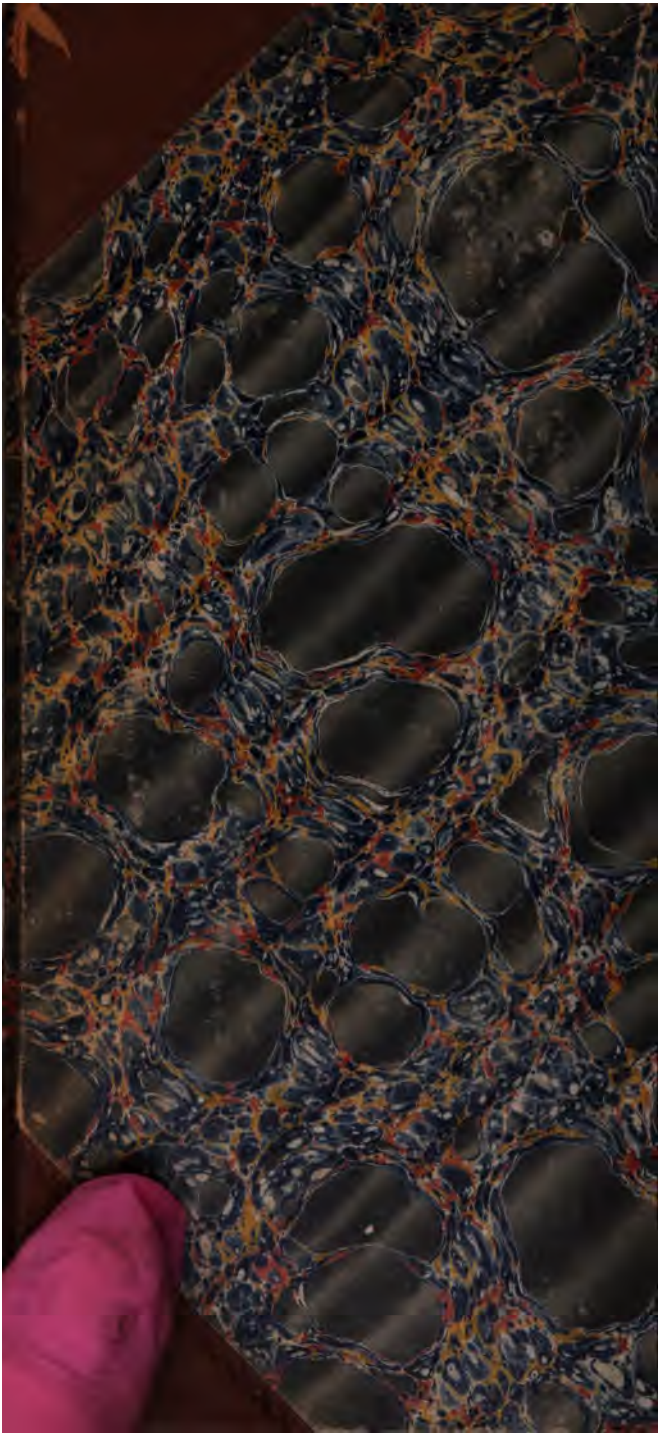
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